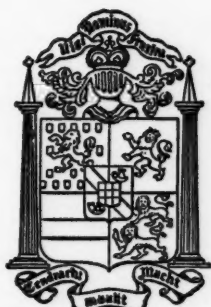


# The REFORMED REVIEW



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# The Reformed Review

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## THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

GORDON L. VAN OOSTENBURG

Shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night. It was probably a calm, peaceful evening. Then all of a sudden, to their great amazement, a mighty blaze lit up the heavens. It transformed midnight into midday. The glory of the Lord surrounded them and alarmed them. The angel of the Lord appeared. Is there any wonder that these poor, humble shepherds were afraid? What a transition! One moment the stillness of the dark night and then suddenly the great light and the heavenly visitor. Then the gentle voice of the angel saying: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10, 11). Thus the shepherds were bidden to shake off their fear and give themselves to joy.

God wants us to see clearly that the birth of Jesus Christ is a subject of supreme joy. If angels rejoiced and were filled with gladness and were made happy to be able to tell the Good News that the invisible, omnipotent God had come into alliance with sinful men, then surely we, for whom he came, should be anointed with joy and gladness. If it caused angels to sing: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men," then how it should cause us to leap for joy. God assumed human flesh. In the manger lay an infant, yet the world's creator. None of us can understand how it could be, yet we believe it and therein do we rejoice!

In one of the buildings in Rome is a beautiful painting that covers the ceiling. However after staring up at it the body grows tired, weary, and dizzy and one is forced to turn away. Now a mirror has been placed on the floor directly below the masterpiece so that the visitor can gaze down and behold its beauty. So the world looked up at the glory of God for thousands of years beholding his beauty in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God." But now he assumed human form and "... in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." What reason for joy! Now we can see God in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we know his desires for us. We see clearly he intends to do us good. He will have compassion on our infirmities and sicknesses. We can rejoice because God freely sympathizes with us.

Our cause for joy mounts as we understand the purpose in his condescension. Mankind needed a teacher, an example, but above all, a Saviour. He came to die, to remove our guilt, to cleanse our hearts. Yes, he came to make our hearts happy—to put the joy bells in our soul. He came to give us "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

It is this blessed joy that the Lord wants us to possess and radiate to the world that lies in gloom and sadness. God is telling us that basically and whichever way you look at the Christian life it is a radiant and splendid thing, radiant with joy and happiness and goodness. When Jesus gave the sermon on the mount he says that the man is blessed, or happy; he is radiant, joyous. A joy that does not depend upon any outward material thing or favorable adjustment to circumstances, but rather the certain knowledge that we belong to our faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ.

However let us be honest with ourselves. Don't we all too often, as the Lord's witnesses, lack this joy? It throbs in the New Testament church. It causes it to sparkle. We read: "They ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," "the disciples were filled with joy," and again "great joy came upon all the brethren." When Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch it says: "he went on his way rejoicing." Paul exhorted the early believers to "rejoice in the Lord." Living in this hectic, busy world, we must remember again that the "joy of the Lord is our strength." If our hearts are not merry we shall soon be weary, exhausted and find our ministry performed in the flesh. Our effectiveness is not merely in being orthodox, keen and zealous. Surely these things must also be true of us. However we misrepresent the Gospel if our spirit is depressed and defeated. If we speak about "Joy to the world" and yet reveal a sad heart we shall find our people as well as the unbeliever pointing the finger at us saying, "Physician heal thyself." Christ will not be recognizable in us. We may be sure that few things bless others like the "merry heart." The Scripture says: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" and "he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." George Mueller felt this was so essential that he refused to leave his morning devotions until his heart was happy. He felt that if he went out calling with a heavy heart it would only cause people to be heavy-hearted. He needed a cheerful heart in order to bless and lift up the souls God directed him to that day. The joy of the Lord so filled the heart of Adoniram Judson that he was called, "Mr. Glory Face." God says, "a merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance."

We must realize that as Christ's ambassadors Christmas means real joy for us. Joy not only because our sins are atoned for and heaven is our sure destination, but joy because Immanuel has come—God is with us and



in his presence there is fullness of joy. It is only as we live in the consciousness that he has come to tabernacle among us and in us that our joy can be complete. We are identified with him. Not by our stress and strain will we reveal the living Christ, but only as we dwell in his presence and allow the blessed Holy Spirit to rule in our lives will we be true to the Christian message. It means that we abide in Christ and his Word abides in us. Then the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, will abound in our life.

As we sense our need of the joy of the Lord let us sincerely ask him for it. Oh the blessedness to possess his joy and to know we are loved by him who called us to proclaim "good tidings of great joy!" Let Christ do what he came to do! May the desire of his heart be realized in us. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

## INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS TWO—THREE

LESTER J. KUYPER

Old Testament studies have made great progress in our times in the areas of knowing the background of Israel's faith. The dust and debris that covered the ancient world have been removed to a remarkable degree so that students now can see the distinctive features of Israel's faith. The factor common to all people is belief either in one supreme god or in a pantheon of gods and goddesses. The pantheon at Ugarit suggests that the one supreme god, El, stood at the head of the hierarchy of gods to whom certain powers were given. This becomes known as the divine council which no doubt was well known to OT writers (cf. Pss. 82:1; 86:8; 95:3).

The distinctive feature in Israel's faith is at the point where God demonstrates his presence in the world. The pagan beliefs find their gods in the realm of nature. The ancient peoples lived very close to nature and their success or failure was directly related to fruits of the fields and the increase of the flocks and herds. Consequently they developed a "theology of nature," for in nature god displayed his favor or his wrath. For Israel the revelation of God primarily occurred, not in nature, but in history. This history concerns itself with Israel and her redemption. The beginning of this redemptive history is the Exodus in which the mighty arm of God delivered his people from the bondage of Egypt. There was a prelude to this when God called the patriarchs and brought them into the land of Canaan. However, the establishing of Israel as God's people and the bringing of them into the promised land became the act of redemption which Israel celebrated in her feasts, sabbaths and psalms.<sup>1</sup>

This, then, becomes the distinctive feature of Israel's faith in contrast to the "natural theologies" of her pagan neighbors. In this redemption-history God reveals his covenantal grace, by which Israel becomes and remains a nation, and his moral rule over Israel so that judgment comes upon apostasy and blessing and favor for faithfulness to the covenant. This is the distinctive feature of the OT that brings the past and the future into the existential present where God confronts Israel and where Israel must respond to God in obedience and faith.

It is not correct, however, to conclude that the OT ignores nature.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts* (London: SCM Press, 1952).

Von Rad<sup>2</sup> points out that Israel had to confront the creation and "fall" stories that prevailed among the peoples. We are now well informed about the creation epics of ancient peoples, and about the struggles between gods and gods and between gods and men which resulted in the catastrophes now so prevalent in the world. In this milieu the prophets of Israel give witness to the revelation of their faith. This revelation which becomes the OT witness in the ancient world is given in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The two accounts of creation, the first by the priestly writer and the second by the Jahwist historian, become Israel's confession of faith in God as creator. The first account presents the orderliness of creation which consummates in the sabbath day, the day by which Israel demonstrates her distinctiveness in the ancient world. The second creation narrative has as its primary purpose the place of man in creation and the break-in of sin into mankind. This becomes the prelude to the break-in of God through his redemptive action in history. This is the pre-history from which the historians narrate the redeeming acts of God in Israel's history. One can sense that this early narrative ranks high in importance even though there is very little reference to it in the rest of the OT. The problems of creation and fall are discussed in intertestamental literature and receive elaboration in the NT, especially by St. Paul, for whom Christ is the true man through whom creation and fallen man are restored for the purpose for which they were created.

Genesis 2-3 employs language which was common to peoples of the ancient world. Much of the literature of that time has symbols and pictures to communicate its ideas of the origin of the world and mankind. Since this was the means of communication of that time, we would expect that God would use the language, style and method that men used and could understand. Perhaps one might describe this as God's "incarnation" into the literature of Israel's world.<sup>3</sup> The incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth would make us expect that these early revelations of God would be truly "human," i.e., they would be embodied in the communication media of that time. And that is what we find throughout the OT. The laws, the poetry, the proverbs are in language and expressions found throughout the ancient East. The researches of archaeologists and historians are pointing up the vast and complex culture of ancient nations and scholars now can discern that Israel did not live in isolation, but rather at the crossroads of history where God could speak to Israel and the world in the language which the world could understand.

<sup>2</sup>*Theologie des Alten Testaments* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958), pp. 140ff.

<sup>3</sup>Thus we also sing:

- Word of God Incarnate,
- Wisdom from on high,
- Truth unchanged, unchanging,
- Light of our dark sky.

Does this involvement in the culture and language of pagan nations militate against the distinctiveness of the OT witness? One may have an annoying fear that the use of "human" means may make the Bible but another "human" book. One may suppose that to have a truly "holy" book there should be a truly "holy" language which would be pure and free from any taint of paganism. If this were the case, and fortunately it is not, then we would have an OT docetism, something of a prelude to a heresy about the person of Christ which taught that Christ was not truly human, but only appeared to be. No, the OT can never be accused of being docetic. God inspires the prophets to speak in the language of that time. And it is in this way that the uniqueness of the OT witness becomes known in Israel and declared to the ancient world. The prophets deliver their message to combat pagan thought and to declare the distinctive or different scope of Israel's faith. They are like Paul speaking on Mars' Hill in which Paul sets forth the distinctive features of "Jesus and the resurrection" against the philosophies of Athens. The OT and the NT are alike in that their witness is distinct and yet relevant to their times.

An interpretation of Genesis Two has been greatly enriched by our knowledge of creation stories of ancient days. From Babylon we learn that the earth comes into being out of a dark, formless, chaotic something. This something is the mother womb of all things that take on form, much like the coming of vegetation out of the barrenness of winter. Even the gods who later become the rulers of the world come into being out of this mysterious source. In sharp contrast the Bible declares that God is "in the beginning" and creates or makes the heavens and the earth. God is the creator and the creation finds its origin and being in the act of God. This is the unique witness of the OT and stands in sharp contrast to the creation stories of the ancient East.<sup>4</sup>

The creation of man as given in Genesis Two is no less unique. In the Sumerian account the gods cause mankind to come forth from the earth. Mankind is in a state without culture, is like the animal in eating, drinking and being naked. Mankind was created to serve the gods, to provide food and shelter for the gods.<sup>5</sup> It appears that mankind was made in the mass and became servants to minister to the needs of the gods. In the Assyrian accounts, one of the gods who is found guilty is put to death or kills himself. From the blood of the dead god, Marduk, another god, creates mankind. The later reworking of the story mixes the blood with the clay out of which mankind is formed. Man was to serve the gods so

<sup>4</sup>Egyptian creation stories are given by John A. Wilson in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, edited by James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 3-10; Akkadian creation epics by E. A. Speiser, *ibid.*, pp. 60-100.

<sup>5</sup>Th. C. Vrieezen, *Onderzoek naar de Paradijsvoorstelling bij de Oude Semietische Volken* (Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1937), pp. 58, 59.

that the gods could be free from toil.<sup>6</sup> In Genesis Two the author describes God creating or forming man from the ground, the earthly elements that went into the being of man, and breathing into man the breath of life. The bringing together of the dust of the earth and the breath of life in this act of God produces man as a living being. In contrast to the Assyrian story, man comes from the world which God had made and not from the blood of the killed god. This points up Israel's monotheism over against the polytheism of the nations. And further, man was not on the level with animals, for he is given a garden to work and keep, he is addressed by God about the eating from the trees in the garden and not eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and he names the animals and finds none among them that is his equal. In other words he is created out of the elements of nature, but is above the elements of nature.

One of the Hebrew words for man is ADAM. This word is used almost exclusively in the first chapters of Genesis. It admits of three interpretations: mankind, man and Adam, a proper noun. Mankind in a collective sense seems to be the sense of chapter 1:26-28, for here after the creation of all the species God creates mankind. In the second chapter the collective idea of mankind seems to shift with the individual, THE MAN or even with the name Adam.<sup>7</sup> The language of the OT allows the interesting phenomenon of having one word or expression embrace concepts of an individual and of a group much like the English word "man" may speak of an individual and of the race. The creation therefore of the man carries with it the double significance of the individual and of mankind.

After the forming of man, God planted a garden in Eden for man (2:8). The garden and the trees in it were for the use and benefit of man. This is not a garden for God although we read of God "walking in the garden" (3:8). The Sumerians and Assyrians describe many places which are the habitation of the gods, and one is the garden of God. To this the prophet Ezekiel no doubt refers in his oracles against the Prince of Tyre and against the King of Egypt (28:13f.; 31:8ff.). In the pagan literature the garden and the trees are reserved for the gods and withheld from the benefit of man. In Genesis Two the garden of Eden is for the en-

<sup>6</sup>Vriezen, *op. cit.*, pp. 85ff. For the Babylonian creation account of man, *vide Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 68.

<sup>7</sup>The English versions use "man" for both Gen. 1:26 and 2:7; the Luther Bible has "Menschen" in both; the Zürich Bible (1931) does the same; the Dutch both the Staten Vertaling (1619), the Nieuwe Vertaling (1951), have "menschen" in 1:26 and "de mens" in 2:7. Koehler makes the observation that "the collective ADAM (mankind and the name Adam are shifting from one to the other, therefore HA'ADAM, e.g. Gn. 2:7, 8, 19; 4:1 is (*der Typus Mensch*) the Man, Adam, but ADAM, Gn. 5:1a, is mankind." *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), p. 12b.

joyment of man and for his food. Here one senses the gracious provision of God for the man that has been created.<sup>8</sup>

The tree of life also is found in the myths of the peoples round about Israel. It is found in connection with the "herb of life" which was reserved only for the gods and not given for the use of man. The Genesis account stands in contrast to the pagan thought in that God offers through the tree of life and all the trees in the garden the fulness of benefits to man. These are in no way restricted for the use of God who has no need of the garden nor the trees in it (cf. Ps. 50:12f). The tree of life, therefore, symbolizes the gracious provisions that God places before man. These are not withheld but freely offered to man that he may reach the fulness of life offered to him by God.<sup>9</sup>

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil which has a prominent part in the story has no parallel in pagan literature. Since the divine prohibition to eat from this tree is an important feature in the fall narrative, it is very necessary to sense the symbolic meaning of "knowledge of good and evil." Interpreters have offered a variety of explanations. Some have proposed that this knowledge of good and evil is a moral knowledge to discern right and wrong; others have suggested that it is a scientific knowledge of the world, or a hidden mysterious knowledge which gave power. Since the eating from this tree made the man and woman aware of their nakedness, some interpret this as the emerging of the sex life. Much as each of the above interpretations has some plausibility, yet none satisfies all the data of the story here.<sup>10</sup> It is plain that the tree represents something which belongs to God alone. If man would take this, he would become like God (3:5, 22). The term, "knowledge of good and evil" apparently represents God's sovereign right to exercise absolute rule over the world which he has created. The placing of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil before man is the setting of a boundary between God and man and the command not to eat of the tree declares that man is to observe that boundary which separates the creature from the Creator.

Even though the tree of knowledge of good and evil is not found in pagan literature, yet the prohibition to eat from this tree attacks the common practice of magicians and diviners of the ancient time. In this practice man claims to employ super-human powers; he takes hold of the sovereignty of God; he manipulates the power of good and evil. The extensive literature of the ancient East and the artifacts of uncovered

<sup>8</sup>W. Zimmerli, *Prophezei 1. Mose 1:11* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1957), pp. 121f.

<sup>9</sup>The tree of life also appears in Proverbs as "wisdom" (3:18), as "the fruit of the righteous" (11:30), as "desire fulfilled" (13:12), as "a gentle tongue" (15:4). In the symbolism of Revelation the tree of life appears planted on "either side of the river" of the water of life (22:2; cf. Eze. 47:12).

<sup>10</sup>Cf. my article in *Interpretation*, Vol I (October, 1947), pp. 489-492.

temples and cults bear eloquent testimony to the presence of magic and divination. Man living in the distant past, much like the present day bedouin, conceived his world to be filled with gods and spirits, some of which were good and others of which were evil. A setting of this sort naturally produced "holy" men who claimed to live in fellowship with the unseen powers and were therefore convinced that they could ward off evil and bring the good. The OT tells us of the magicians in the courts of Egypt and of Babylon. The injunctions against witchcraft, augury and divination are to keep Israel from the practices of the nations which they dispossessed (Deut. 18:9-14). Even in NT times the Church encountered the practice of magic in Samaria by Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-11), in Philippi (16:16) and in Ephesus (19:13, 18f.).

The "knowledge" tree in the garden symbolizes the boundary between God and man, between God's absolute sovereignty and man's limited sovereignty. The first trespass which arrogantly ignored that boundary and sought to place divine power in man's hands was repeatedly committed by the "holy" men of pagan cults who possessed that mysterious knowledge of good and evil. One can sense, therefore, that the symbolism of this tree has a relevance to the times of Israel's life.

In this account of creation we are told about the garden which was in Eden. Scholars have expended much effort to locate this garden where man first lived. The results of archaeology have been most helpful in locating ancient and biblical sites, but alas, with all these data before us and the ingenious insights(!) of scholars we still have not succeeded in arriving at an actually certain location of the garden in Eden.<sup>11</sup> However, a discussion on the location of the garden and the four rivers flowing from the garden is in place here.

The first river in this passage (2:10-14) has the name Pishon, which is described as flowing around the whole land of Havilah, which land is known for its gold and precious stones, bdellium and onyx. The name Havilah is associated with Ophir (Gen. 10:29) and also with Egypt, OT Cush (10:7; 25:18; I Sam. 15:7). Since much is made of the gold of that land, and since gold was brought by the fleet of Solomon from Ophir (I Kgs. 9:28; 10:11) we may conjecture that Havilah is Ophir, which may be located in southern Arabia. If this may be accepted, then the Pishon leaves the Garden of Eden to flow into South Arabia.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>W. Zimmerli, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>12</sup>W. F. Albright with the same data concludes that the Pishon and the second river, the Gihon, are to be located in Egypt and that they are the Blue and the White Niles which unite at Khartoum above the sixth cataract, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), Vol. XXXIX, 22-23. Th. C. Vriezen diffidently suggests north Arabia as the land where the Pishon flows, *op. cit.*, p. 156. Many ancient authorities set the Pishon in India, the Ganges or Indus rivers. For good survey of views consult J. Skinner, *Genesis*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), pp. 62-66.



The second river's name, Gihon, appears as the name of a spring east of Jerusalem where Solomon was anointed king (I Kgs. 1:33, 38). This offers no help for location of the river, for in the Genesis account the river flows around the whole land of Cush, commonly thought to be Egypt. This has led some scholars to identify the river with the Nile.<sup>13</sup>

The third river, Hiddekel, is known to us as Tigris, which name comes from the old Persian *Tigra*. This river and the fourth river, Euphrates have long been known to have their sources in Upper Mesopotamia, in the highlands of Armenia. Because of the well-known location of these rivers, it is tempting to locate the river which flows out of the Garden of Eden in Upper Mesopotamia, even though we now know of no common source for the Tigris and Euphrates rivers there.<sup>14</sup>

Because of the difficulties one is tempted to abandon any attempt at interpretation of the meaning of the Garden of Eden in our narrative. Yet this story must have made sense both for the author and for the reader, and therefore we ought not to spare any diligence to find its sense now. It is plain that the geographical data are of two kinds: that which is well-established in our knowledge of ancient geography and that which appears to be legendary. Or we may call this a combination of real geography with symbolical geography, the factual with the figurative. The factual is indicated by the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and the figurative by the rivers Pishon and Gihon. These latter ones have their source with the former in Upper Mesopotamia and then fantastically flow into Arabia and into Egypt. Von Rad considers this a reflection of a very archaic world map which the author uses to show that water which is the source of life in all countries comes from the river which once watered the Garden of Eden. A more substantial comment by von Rad is that there is "*eine strasse Verbindung von Eden und dem Garten einerseits mit der geschichtlichen Welt des Menschen andererseits*."<sup>15</sup> For me the account appears here and throughout to combine the real with the symbolical; in this case the combination is between the factual geography and the figurative

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Albright *supra*. Objection to this is that the Hebrews knew the Nile as definitely as the Tigris and the Euphrates which also appear in this story, and therefore there is no point to using a mysterious name for the Nile. Cf. Vriezen, *op. cit.*, p. 157. Zimmerli has a good observation in that Pishon and Gihon are names coming out of tradition associated with great rivers (*op. cit.* p. 126).

<sup>14</sup>Zimmerli, *op. cit.* p. 126. Also Procksch, *Die Genesis* (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1913), p. 26. At the lower end of Mesopotamia E. T. Sayce finds the "source" river, viz., the Persian Gulf which according to ancient concepts was the source of all world rivers. *Expository Times* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 1905-1906, pp. 469ff. Sayce's theory encounters difficulties, chief of which is that lower Mesopotamia can hardly be the source for the Tigris and Euphrates. G. Ch. Aalders states that the data allow no conclusion and he hopes for more light in the future. *De Goddelijke Openbaring in de Eerste Drie Hoofdstukken van Genesis* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1932), pp. 445-448.

<sup>15</sup>*Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Das erste Buch Mose* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), p. 64.



ative. The intention of the author may be to set the background of the Genesis story in a definite locale which also becomes the figurative center of the world.

Any reading of the two accounts of creation will note the difference in the order of things created, and especially the place the creation of man has in that order. Chapter One places man at the end of a series which begins with plant life and continues through animal life until it consummates in God's creating man in his image and likeness. In chapter Two the order is reversed, for man is first formed by God after which the Lord God plants a garden and causes trees to grow in the garden. This shows the gracious concern of God for man, for in this garden man is to live and to work. Further, God is concerned for man's life in society, for he said, "It is not good that man be alone" (2:18). Man must have someone that corresponds to him, someone that will be his companion.

The aloneness of man and the concern of God to relieve that aloneness are the setting for the creation of the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Just as the garden and the trees in it were made for the benefit of man, so now the animals are also made to serve his needs. The account notes that the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air out of the ground (2:14). One cannot but observe that both man and animal have their origin from the ground. The ground relates them to each other. Yet the author makes a clear distinction between them, for God breathes into the nostrils of man the breath of life. This is not said in the forming of the animal, even though we may note that in other places of the OT the animal does have the breath of life from God (Ps. 104:29f., cf. Gen. 7:15). This distinction unmistakably points up the gulf that separates man from animal. Or perhaps one should here sense the closeness of man to God who in this graphic anthropomorphism must stoop down to breathe into the lifeless form the breath of life. Could one have a more picturesque description of man's double relationship—to the animal in a common origin from the ground, and to God because of the breath of life?<sup>16</sup>

God brings the animals to man to see what man would call them. Man is to give names to the animals which God has made. To understand this part of the story, we must comprehend what the giving of a name denotes. In the Hebrew mind it signifies sovereignty over the one who receives the name. To name something or someone is to be sovereign over that thing or person. In chapter 1:5 God names the light day and

<sup>16</sup>Eichrodt has well declared that there is a clear boundary between man and the animal so that man does not find his completion in the sub-human creation, nor can man be submerged in nature. "The Creator's greatest gift to man, that of the personal I, necessarily places him, in analogy with God's being, at a distance from nature." *Man in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 30.

the darkness night, and thereby declares his sovereignty over the day and the night. Pharaoh Necho of Egypt changed the name of Eliakim, king of Judah, to Jehoiakim, and the king of Babylon changed another king's name, Mattaniah, to Zedekiah (II Kings 23:34; 24:17), to indicate their sovereignty over Judah. *Namengebung ist Herrschaftsakt*.<sup>17</sup> So the giving of names to animals is man's exercising his God-given sovereignty over that part of the world which God had made for the good of man. This is what the author of chapter One describes as having dominion over the animals (v. 28). Here one may see that God abundantly provides man with the opportunity to exercise the powers placed within him.

A secondary purpose is achieved in bringing the animals before man. A search among them reveals that not one could relieve the aloneness of man. Even though animal and man have a common origin in the ground, and even though sovereignty over another may indicate a close fellowship (cf. 3:16), yet the author would make the point clear that man's aloneness cannot be satisfied in a fellowship with the animal. Man is above the animal for he has an intimate relationship with God.

This particular aloneness of man is not the opposite of man living in society. This is not the contrast of a hermit with life in a community. The word here used for man is ADAM which may also mean mankind, which suggests that the lack of communal life does not bring on man's aloneness. The account intends to make clear the place woman has in bringing man out of his aloneness and in bringing to man the fulness of life which he could not find in the animal world or in society. Only woman can make man realize his full potential in existence.

The Lord God causes a deep sleep to come upon man, which is to prevent man from seeing the miracle act of God. This is not the common natural sleep, but one that is especially sent by God. This sleep also came upon Abram when God concluded the covenant with him (Gen. 15:12). Man is not to see God perform his mighty acts, for man is not to see God and live (Ex. 33:18-23). So here man is not to see this wonder which God does. And man may not even see the place from which God took the rib to make woman, for that was closed up with flesh. The miraculous mystery of creation is kept hidden from man. He does not see it, he can only believe it!

The author narrates that woman is made from a rib which God took from the side of man. One should note that God did not form woman from the ground as he had done in forming man, as well as in the forming of animals. She is taken immediately from man, which is to make unmistakably clear that she is of the very substance which man has. She is not a species distinct from man, possibly on a level between man and

<sup>17</sup>Giving names is rulership act. Zimmerli, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

the animal. She becomes a "helper fit for him" or the one who fully corresponds to him or one who is man's true counterpart (2:18). It is this special and miraculous creation of woman that removes the aloneness of man. This is the result of God's wondrous act. Man may live in the beauty and bounty of Eden, he may have complete dominion over the animals, he may have a place in society, yet he lives in loneliness which is not good. Only woman can bring the "good" into the life of man. For that purpose she was created. Surely this declares the lofty place woman has in the OT. The OT in this account places womankind far above the level she had among the ancients where she was often considered a piece of property.<sup>18</sup>

The reader of the story is easily carried away with the dramatic style of the author who pictures God bringing the woman as a bride to man. The scene is of that of a joyous marriage. The man speaks in a spontaneous burst of ecstasy. He refers to her three times as "this one." He senses at once that she is his perfect counterpart. She is truly *from* him, "bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh," and she is truly *for* him. And here again man gives names by which he exercises his lordship over the relationship between man and woman. She is to be called *ishsha*, woman, because she is taken from *ish*, man. The two Hebrew nouns allow for a happy play on words to symbolize the happy intimate relationship between man and woman. This one, the man declares, is "at last" the culmination of an arduous search to find the proper helper for man. It is God's gracious concern for man and his creative power that "at last" bring to man the woman who is for his "good."

In v. 24 the author gives the purpose of the narration. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh." This is not said by the Lord nor by the man, but by the author who saw this remarkable phenomenon in the ordinary life of his day. The closely knit relationship of a son to his parents was regularly being broken as the son entered the marriage bond. The ties of marriage were stronger than the ties of affection for parents. And parents were held in high esteem in Israel. How is this recurring phenomenon to be explained? The explanation is to be found in the creation of woman. She was taken from man, she was created to be his helper, she was created to correspond to him. And she was to relieve the loneliness of man. Her creation for man was for man's "good," for God had said that aloneness was "not good" for man. If one wonders why a man leaves his home

<sup>18</sup>An ancient myth narrates that the unsuccessful attempts at creating woman became animals, Vriezen (*op. cit.*, pp. 164f). Another myth taken from the Gilgamesh epic relates that Enkidu, a wild man of the desert, lived with the animals until a sacred woman alienated him from the animal world so that the animals fled from him even though he wanted to return to them (*ibid.*, p. 165).

to be united to a woman, the reason is that God's gracious act at the beginning made it so.

It is in place again to note here that the writer places a high value on woman. For man to leave his father and his mother is to abandon his most precious attachments in life for the ties of father and son, not to mention mother and son, were very strong in Israel. The family unit in Israel was the basis of their national life, and the ties that bound the family in one unit lay deep in the affections of the people. Yet more precious than the family is the woman, his wife, to man. She takes priority in his affection and esteem.

This picturesque way of describing the worth and position of woman to man becomes the model of a relationship between God and Israel (Hos. 2:19f.) and between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31f.). This important spiritual relationship can receive its full meaning by an understanding of the forming of woman to be a helper suitable for man and of man's cleaving to her. And further the relationship of God to his people as depicted in the OT and the relationship of Christ to the Church in the NT can serve as an appropriate pattern by which man may realize his "good" in cleaving to her who is "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh."

The dire consequences of man's rebellion against God as narrated in Chapter Three deprive man of the garden of Eden, and he loses much about which we shall learn later in our discussion. However, the joining of man and woman in one flesh as related here is a blessing that remains. To be sure, the law did allow divorce but only because of "the hardness of your hearts." Jesus' comment on this matter indicates that the joining of a man with his wife and their becoming one is even now the essential "good" for man even though "the hardness of your hearts" has come in. This union wrought by the gracious and miraculous act of God still offers its beneficent joy and peace to man. The ruin of the fall did not destroy this which was "from the beginning so" (Matt. 19:4-6).

The author closes the account with another comment about the man and his wife being naked and yet not being ashamed. This verse by itself has no ready meaning even though some regard this as descriptive of a childlike innocence in which shame for the sex life has not appeared. Rather, this verse in the light of chapter 3:10, 11, where the man hid himself, indicates that man lived without guilt before God and therefore he was without shame. Immediately after his transgression man becomes aware of his nakedness and hides himself. The sense of shame is due to his sense of guilt. The intent of the author in v. 25 seems therefore to picture man in a state of a clear conscience before God. He lived in a free and blessed communion with his Creator.

*(To be continued in the following issue)*

## CALVIN'S TWO-VOICE THEORY OF PREACHING

JOHN H. GERSTNER

Perhaps the simplest and most fundamental characterization of Calvin's homiletical theory is the two-voice theory of preaching. Calvin himself uses this expression, although in a different application, namely to the inviting and the warning voice of the preacher. "*Il faut que nous ayons double voix . . . une voix douce pour exhorter ceux qui se rendront dociles, et pour les guider au droit chemin: et . . . une autre voix pour crier contre les loups et les larrons, afin de les chasser du troupeau.*"<sup>1</sup> Thus the minister must ever be wooing the sheep and shooing the wolves. However, there is another sense in which, according to Calvin's thought, the preacher speaks with a "*double voix.*" God has spoken in his Word and he speaks again through his preachers. So, when the man in the pulpit is heard, God is heard, too; not one but two voices are heard. "In Calvin's Homily 42 on I Sam. he stresses the authority of prophets and pastors in the Christian Church, declaring that they are 'the very mouth of God.' And in his commentary on John 3:2 he declares that we are not to listen to any persons except those by whose mouth God speaks."<sup>2</sup>

We need not discuss here Calvin's view of the inspiration of the Bible. Sufficient to say that, for the Reformer, the Scriptures are the very Word of God. In them God spoke. He dictated their contents to men whom Calvin called amanuenses. Calvin exercised thorough freedom in critical analyses in order to ascertain the true Word of God in distinction from accretions or corruptions or emendations. But the true Bible text was nothing less than the speech of God before which Calvin bowed in utter reverence. For him the Bible was inspired verbatim and litteratim (*Inst.*, I, vii, 1; IV, viii, 9; IV, viii, 6; *Comm. on 2 Tim.* 3:16; John 12:13, etc.).

It was not God's will, according to Calvin, that the divine word should lie dormant confined to the sacred text. On the contrary, it was to be taken from thence and brought to bear on the lives of men. However, it was not the prerogative of all men to take the word and thus apply it.

<sup>1</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum.* Cf. Mülhaupt, *Die Predigt Calvins*, p. 30; Stauffer, *L'Homiletique de Calvin* [thesis], pp. 92f.

<sup>2</sup>J. T. McNeill, "The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin," *Church History*, June, 1959, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, p. 144; cf. also 6th sermon on Deut., *Opera* XXV, 666,667; 76th sermon on Ephes. II, 415; *Predigten über II Sam.*, p. 136.

This was the function of the ordained minister. For Calvin there was an elect ministry of the church no less than an elect membership.

Because of this high and sacred calling, ministers are designated by every conceivable honorific. They are the "angels of God,"<sup>3</sup> divinely instituted (*divinement institutes; divinitus ordinati*, I Tim. 1:8). They are the "instruments" of God. God speaks through his ministers and when the people hear them they are face to face with the deity himself. "We may then conclude from these words, that the glory of God so shines in His Word, that we ought to be so much affected by it, whenever He speaks by His servants, as though He were nigh to us, face to face."<sup>4</sup> The preacher is the "trumpet" of God. Speaking personally he says: "Has the Lord wished that I should be here in the pulpit to be received by men as their superior? Indeed no. But to be the Lord's trumpet to summon His to Himself that they may obey Him. In other respects I am one of the flock like the rest."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Calvin, as we have seen, calls the preacher the "mouth of God." Wallace summarizes the matter well. "The Word of God is not distinguished from the words of the Prophet (Hag. 1:12; CR 4:94). He is not separated from the minister (I Cor. 3:7; CR 49:35). God Himself who is the author is co-joined with the instrument, and the Spirit's influence with man's labour (I Cor. 9:1; CR 49:438). So close is this identity that the preacher can actually be called a *minister of the Spirit* and his work spoken of in the most exalted terms (I Cor. 3:7; CR 49:350). Indeed, it may legitimately be said that it is the preacher who effects what is really effected by God."<sup>6</sup> Likewise Mülhaupt remarks:

*"Er hat sich nicht gescheut, diese Einheit von Gott und des Verkündigung des Predigers deutlich auszusprechen: 'All die, die unterrichten, können in Wahrheit feierlich bekennen, Jesus Christus spreche durch sie.'"*<sup>7</sup>

These statements are so unqualified, absolute and sweeping that many students of this subject are hard put to it to find Calvin making any distinction between God and his servant when preaching. Nevertheless, Calvin does make a distinction. His reverence for God will not be overwhelmed by his sense of the dignity of the preacher's office. As Wallace following an impressive summary of Calvin's high view of this subject concludes: "But even when all this happens there must remain at the same time the sharpest distinction between what is divine and what is

<sup>3</sup>Doumergue, *Calvin, le Prédicateur de Genève*, Geneva, 1909, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum* 44:95, Hag. 1:12; Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, p. 82.

<sup>5</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum* 81:219; G. Johnson, "Calvinism and Preaching," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 1932, pp. 244f.

<sup>6</sup>Ronald S. Wallace, *op. cit.* p. 91.

<sup>7</sup>E. Mülhaupt, *Die Predigt Calvins*, p. 28; *Corpus Reformatorum* 81:7

human in this mysterious event. 'We require to distinguish . . . we must set the Lord on one side and the minister on the other. We must view the minister as one that is servant, not a master — an instrument, not the hand, and in short as man, not God' " (cf. Sermon on Luke 1:16-18, CR 46:39).<sup>7A</sup> The point is that Calvin is generally thinking of a sound preacher when he makes the grand statements about his authority. He is assuming that the preacher is doing what a preacher, according to definition, is doing: namely, soundly expounding and applying the sacred Scripture. If that he does, then when he speaks God does speak; when his voice is heard God's voice is heard; when his mouth is open God's mouth is speaking; when he is in the pulpit an angel of God stands there; when he warns, exhorts, invites, the sinner is face to face with God himself. This is no exaggeration or hyperbole; it is matter of fact, bare truth.

From this two voice theory of preaching, all the other Calvinistic principles can be easily deduced. Of course, if the preacher is appointed to be the articulator of the Word of God his very first duty will be study that Word in order to be a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Exegesis will be his first line of duty; exposition his meat and drink. He will give himself to reading and study will be his basic labor. When he emerges from his desk to his pulpit he will come to explain clearly, accurately and effectively the Word of God. Were he a preacher of his own experience, perhaps the latest antics of his three year old would be the text of the morning. Were he a dreamer of dreams perhaps his style would be: "Now I feel thus and so." Were he a speculative philosopher by calling, then he could preach: Q.E.D. But if he is the voice of the voice of God, then he must say (and be true in saying it); "Thus saith the Lord." And that requires study of what God has said.

It was this feature of his theory that made Calvin's sermons essentially popular commentaries. There is no essential difference between what he preached to his congregation and what he wrote for his readers. His sermons were actually the bases—shall we say, the rough draft of his more finished and scholarly commentaries. As Bowman has noted, Calvin's commentaries are largely the outgrowth of the lectures and sermons.<sup>8</sup> The only difference which we have noted between sermon and commentary is that the sermon has less exegesis and more application; the commentary more exegesis and less application. But the difference is clearly one of degree and not of kind. The scholar may profitably study the sermons; and the common reader will receive much edification from the commentaries.

<sup>7A</sup>Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup>John C. Bowman, "Calvin as a Preacher," *The Reformed Church Review*, 1909, p. 254.



Pasquet has observed that there is no fundamental difference even between Calvin's sermons and his immortal *Institutes*:

*En résumé, le style des Sermon est peut-être un peu plus lâche, un peu plus négligé que celui de l'Institution Chrétienne, qu'on admire tant et avec raison, mais cela, on le comprend sans peine en pensant aux difficultés inevitables d'une improvisation presque quotidienne; toutefois, d'une manière générale, ce style est de la même trempe que la pensée de l'écrivain; précis, nerveux, dédaigneux des grâces superflues et des civilités de langages, il est le reflet exact de la parfaite netteté de son intelligence. Prédicateur ou écrivain, l'expression juste et fortement découpée lui arrivait sans effort: il était pour ainsi dire porté par sa pensée même; et ses sermons improvisés, ses écrits dictés à la volée ou tracés au cours de la plume son tous également marqués de cette même empreinte de justesse et de vigueur.<sup>8A</sup>*

A second principle which comes directly from the two voice theory is clarity. If the preacher is appointed to convey God's Word to the people, next to accuracy of interpretation will be clarity of expression. If it is important in the first place that the preacher understand, it is equally important in the next place that the congregation understand. The expositor may be obliged to use all the technical tools of hermeneutical science in order to understand and then to dispense with them in order to be understood. Such a preacher was Calvin. He anticipated the advice of the great homiletician, John A. Broadus, who said once in days happily past when negroes were uneducated persons: "Read Bishop Butler and preach to the negroes." He meant "Master the hardest literature and make yourself understandable to the least educated." Calvin read Butler and he preached to the negroes.

Directness, simplicity and brevity were the marks of a Calvinistic sermon.<sup>9</sup> We all remember Calvin's own defense when Westphal charged him with "babbling." He stuck to the point, he replied, and practiced a "cautious brevity."<sup>10</sup>

Johnson has asserted that Calvin's theory of clear preaching is quite the antithesis of the Barthian style. The latter is "analogous to the elevation of the Host, the exhibition of a mystery not to be comprehended by the worshipping multitude, but contemplated only that the devout may lose themselves in wonder, love and praise."<sup>11</sup> We are reminded that F. L. Patton once said that Liberals also seem to want to be vague. Said he in a characteristic witticism: "Liberals fly at a low level of visibility."

<sup>8A</sup>E. Pasquet, *Essai sur la Prédication de Calvin*, pp. 31, 32.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Stauffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 77 ff.

<sup>10</sup>Bowman, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>11</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 255.



But Calvin and Calvinistic preachers have tried to understand and to be understood.

A third derivative principle of the two voice preaching theory is that application should be emphasized. If it is the prerogative of one group and one group only—the preachers—to study the Word of God for purposes of official popular instruction, then the primary function of the people must be to do what this instruction indicates. Of course, the preacher is to do as well as study; and the congregation is to study as well as do. But the primary and distinctive task of the preacher is to understand the Word of the Lord and the primary and distinctive task of the congregation is to obey in the Lord.

It seems always to surprise non-Calvinists that Calvinists should believe in preaching at all; much more that they should expect to accomplish anything by it. According to the non-Calvinistic theory of the Calvinistic theory, the decrees of God should render all human effort unnecessary—both that of the preacher and the preached to. According to this notion, Calvinists, if they preached at all, certainly would not expect to accomplish anything by it. Their sermons would have to be all theory and no application. They might instruct the minds but they surely could not affect the wills on their theory, since what will be will be, sermon or no sermon, preacher or no preacher. This, of course, only shows how little non-Calvinists understand the Calvinism they propose to criticize. How constantly amazed they are that Calvinistic preachers are most activist; preach most for decisions; urge, exhort, invite without ceasing. As it has been with Calvinistic preachers so it was with John Calvin himself. The emphasis was on action, application, *toe passing*, as you Dutch Calvinists would say.

The sermon on II Tim. 1:8-9<sup>12</sup> is a good illustration of Calvin's usage of the predestinarian theme. After developing this doctrine in the early part of the sermon he presses for action and the doing of duty saying: "It is wisdom in us to do what God appointeth, and never ask why."<sup>13</sup> Concerning those who say that election should not be preached, Calvin insisted that "such men never tasted of God's goodness." Continuing this sermon in the afternoon he affirmed that "St. Paul speaketh so largely upon this subject, in his epistle to the Ephesians, that it cannot be but the enemies of God's predestination are stupid and ignorant, and that the devil hath plucked out their eyes."<sup>14</sup> After much comfort to the elect he concludes the sermon urging his hearers not to be willingly blind but believing.

Important as was exposition, the preacher's duty did not end there;

<sup>12</sup>*The Mystery of Godliness*, pp. 25 ff.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 43, 44.

indeed it only began there. Exposition was to be unto effect; truth unto godliness; faith unto life; creed unto deed. Whatever else your sermon has, it must have application, says Calvin. "Pratique" is the word for Calvin's sermons.

*"La vraie doctrine, répète-t-il du haut de cette chaire, est une doctrine de pratique." Le critère d'une doctrine est l'édification qu'elle produit. Tout doctrine, — si sainte, si profonde qu'elle paraisse, — si elle ne profite pas à la édification de tous, grands et petits est une "speculation inutile," une "curiosité frivole," un "fratras," un "conte de cicogne," une "folie," un "sacrilège."<sup>15</sup>*

"We have not come to the preaching merely to hear what we do not know, but to be incited to do our duty."<sup>16</sup> For Calvin, the chief end of a sermon was to lead men to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

There is no sermon of Calvin's which we have read which lacks an application. Of course, in the nature of the text, some sermons require much more exposition than others. But however deeply Calvin may expound he never loses sight of his practical purpose. Compare for example the sermon on II Tim. 1:8, 9<sup>17</sup> which is an important doctrinal discussion of the decrees worthy of the author of the *Institutes* though immediately practical throughout. However, some sermons of Calvin are largely application; compare, for example the sermon on Luke 2:1-14.<sup>18</sup>

To illustrate Calvin's constant interweaving of exposition and application let us present a brief but comprehensive summary of a typical sermon, that on II Thess. 1:6-10.<sup>19</sup> Christ, says the preacher, must appear from heaven; for our faith is weak and God would assure us that it is to his purpose to vindicate the gospel. Therefore, we can surely rest in the outcome of the affair. Christ cannot maintain the glory of faith unless he declare himself to be our Redeemer. It is also a strong comfort to us that God will take vengeance on evil doers. "Since His majesty is inestimable, their torment must also be incomprehensible to us." God says that men are rebels; faith, therefore must be obedience. But to obey God we must love his Word; we cannot please him otherwise. The Romanists "torment themselves more and more with their so-called devotions. It seems to them as if they have a good grip on God . . ." He charges Romanists with attempting to earn what God would give them. "You charge like a bull against all the promises God gives you and claim to have gotten by yourselves what only Christ can give you." So, he con-

<sup>15</sup>Doumergue, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum*, 79:783.

<sup>17</sup>*The Mystery of Godliness*, pp. 25 ff.

<sup>18</sup>*The Deity of Christ and Other Sermons*, edited by Leroy Nixon, pp. 35 ff.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 290 ff.; *Corpus Reformatorum* 52:225-238.

tinues, speaking now to the Evangelicals, we must magnify God because he has drawn us.

Calvin goes on, opening from the text that the disobedient do not understand. Still, their ignorance is not from pure simplicity but from malice and the like. However, until God enlightens them men are totally ignorant. "For we may well comprehend everything in heaven and upon earth, but until we have known God, what is all the rest worth?" Again Calvin reverts to the point that God would assure us by Christ's coming, even though that coming will be terrible for the unbelieving.

Our preacher notes next that Paul compares the first and second coming of Christ. Men rebel because of the humility of the first coming. But the second time Christ will come as a Judge. He "will come to be admired in his saints; so we need not fear because he will be glorified in believers. That will not be because we are worthy." Rather "He wills to do it because He loves us." So Christ is speaking to us now in comfort, "for we are marked men, they point fingers at us . . ." So we must respond in faith; otherwise we will be cut off. On the other hand, "If we have true faith, we cannot help becoming more and more sanctified." This is necessary to the presence of the Holy Spirit. "Thus we shall not rely upon false tokens to usurp this title of faith, as it is such a sacred thing." The sermon ends characteristically: "Let us bow in reverence before our God."

When we compare the preaching of Calvin with that of Jonathan Edwards, we note a common emphasis on application, but a very different way of handling it. Edwards's application is always in the latter part of the sermon and usually about equal in length to the preceding exposition. Calvin, however, has no such neat division. His application runs throughout the sermon and as we have said often quite overbalances the expository part of the sermon.

There is a pattern, of course, to Calvin's method, but it is not nearly so regular as T. H. L. Parker suggests in *The Oracles of God, an Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin*. He breaks down the Calvinistic structure into the following pattern:

1. Prayer.
2. Recapitulation of previous sermon.
3. (a) Exegesis and exposition of first member.  
(b) Application of this, and exhortation to obedience of duty.
4. (a) Exegesis and exposition of second member.  
(b) Application of this, and exhortation to obedience or duty.
5. Bidding to prayer, which contains a summary of the sermon.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>P. 71.

While this is something of an over-simplification, or better, something of an over-schematization, Parker's point has at least two merits. First, many of Calvin's sermons do follow the structure indicated. Second, it may be said to be Calvin's tendency to follow this pattern. This is no doubt what he intended to do. And the only reason he did not always do it, if I may guess, was that he was so eager to get at the application that he often introduced it in the midst of the exposition. In other words, application was the dominant element in the preaching of John Calvin to which all else was subordinated.

The fourth deduction from Calvin's two-voice theory of preaching is surprising and hardly seems to be a logical deduction at all. We refer to his practice of impromptu preaching. We mean by impromptu, "impromptu" not merely extempore. Calvin preached not only without a manuscript; not only without notes; but apparently without any outline whatever unless it was the order of the verses in the Bible itself.

This is surprising, we say, because at first reflection one would expect this type of preaching from John Calvin least of any. Scholars are not commonly addicted to improvisation. The impromptu is not the usual method of the deliberate thinker. Precisionists are not given to spontaneity. If, as Bacon said, writing makes the exact man it may also be observed that the exact man is usually given to writing. As a matter of fact, if we were told that some persons during the Reformation period practiced impromptu preaching and were asked from our general knowledge of the period to guess who these persons were, we would probably say they were the "lunatic fringe," the ones Luther called *Schwärmer*, the "heavenly prophets," those whom Calvin accused of attempting to separate the Spirit from the Word, illumination from study, insight from exegesis. If we were asked to guess who among the Reformers would never resort to impromptu preaching, we would likely say, John Calvin. Luther? Well, yes, it is conceivable that that ebullient German would. Calvin? Never; it is unthinkable that that cautious Frenchman would.

But the fact is that he did. And he did so deliberately. That is, his indeliberate speaking was deliberate policy on his part. The speaking may have been impromptu but the decision to speak impromptu was not. Calvin not only did not write his sermons but he was opposed to anyone writing sermons. To the Duke of Somerset he said in a letter: "I say this to your Highness because there is little of living preaching in your kingdom, sermons there being mostly read or recited."<sup>21</sup> Calvin himself never, so far as our records go wrote a single sermon. There is no manuscript in his hand of a pulpit deliverance. The only reason we have the two thousand and plus sermons, is that a certain Denis Raguenier (or

<sup>21</sup>Bowman, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

Raguenau) took them down as they came from his mouth from the year 1549 until this scribe's death in 1560. Calvin apparently never intended them to be published. They were delivered on the moment and they were meant to meet the need of a particular moment.

On second thought it may be profoundly logical that Calvin should have been an impromptu speaker. It may be exactly what we should have expected. After all, preaching, as we have seen, consisted not only of divine truth assimilated by the careful study, but communication as well. As far as communication is concerned it seems to be an axiom that freedom and alacrity, animation and spontaneity are the chief desiderata. Every preacher who ever had to preach without previous preparation and has had to lean entirely on the grace of God and nervous energy, only to have his congregation tell him afterward that it was the best sermon he ever preached realizes what power of communication there is in the unwritten word. Paper is not a good conductor. A manuscript is a barrier between any preacher and his people. The fact that some preachers have been successful readers is largely because they did not seem to be readers. They read so expertly and surreptitiously that the impression of spontaneity was given to a rather gullible congregation. When we are told that as mobile a preacher as Billy Sunday read a manuscript we can believe that some men can read with more apparant spontaneity that other men can preach spontaneously. But, manifestly, freedom and animation are usually better accomplished by preaching without notes. With his customary good seense Calvin seems to have known all this centuries before so-called modern speech methods.

Still, after all is said, it is almost impossible to believe that anyone could preach as Calvin preached, impromptu. That such sermons came unanticipated from the tongue, virtually unpremeditated, without benefit of rephrasing, recasting, deliberate choice of language, though "he spoke from his pastor's or his professor's pulpit sometimes every day for months, sometimes twice a day for weeks,"<sup>22</sup> is astounding.

Our own theory—and this is theory unsupported by any known facts—is that Calvin in his study of the text for preaching thought of various things he wanted to say by way of application as well as exposition. Without writing them down, perhaps, his extraordinary memory was capable, conceivably, of recalling these thoughts generally and his extraordinarily quick wit, brilliant understanding, masterful command of language, simply produced the homiletical miracle on the spot! Calvin once said of public prayers that very few ministers had the gift of making good ones spontaneously and therefore advised the generality of ministers to use prepared prayers. We hope that he would be as willing to admit that

<sup>22</sup>Doumergue cited by L. Nixon, *John Calvin, Expository Preacher*, p. 38.

the generality of ministers (say 9,999 out of every ten thousand) given a previous study of the passage and a few thoughts by way of application would still not be able to manufacture homiletical masterpieces on the spot and would therefore allow us to write something (at least an outline); and to memorize something (at least an outline) and if we had to do (as he often did) preach new sermons five and six times in a week even to bring an outline in the pulpit with us occasionally if we promised not to lean on it too heavily. I am sure that the last thing in the world which Calvin would want us to learn is what J. Gresham Machen called the worst thing that a young preacher ever learned, namely, that he could speak without preparation. Speaking without notes is one thing; speaking without preparation is quite another. Often those who speak without notes are those who speak without preparation; and those who speak with preparation are often those who speak with manuscript on desk. But Calvin has shown us all a better way—to speak with preparation and without notes.

A fifth deduction from the two-voice theory of preaching, quite similar and closely related to the foregoing, was the colloquial style. Any foreigner coming to Geneva and going to hear the celebrated Calvin preach must have exclaimed: "What! Is this the great Calvin? The man Melancthon called 'the theologian?' The author of the greatest systematic theology ever penned? Why he uses the language of the street! He even stoops to slang! I was under the impression that he was a stylist and he speaks more like a fish merchant." Doumergue again:

Besides we see here a really astonishing number of proverbs, several to a sermon, sometimes several in a single phrase: "Without wings, they want to take the moon in their teeth, as they say." "Sicknesses come by horse and go away on foot." Some greedy ones "would drink the sea and the fishes, as they say." Others, lazy ones, "leave things undone or half done, as they say." "At last, as they say" and "we are tempted to make of one devil, two, as they say."

It is the tone, the real tone of the people, restored, recalled; and Calvin sticks to it. He uses the expressions of the country, a "mouge, as we say here," for a heifer; a "paccot, as we say here," for thick mud. He multiplies especially his comparisons and descriptions borrowed from the daily usage, the lowest in the world of his listeners, from the city and from the country. He describes the pot that boils, in the fireplace, of which the first broth "makes a scum," after that come others. He recalls that, in order to cook meat and save its flavor, we must have "a big fire under the pot," so that the flesh may be "cooked quickly, otherwise it becomes insipid." He is

no less informed on all maladies of wine, to become flat, sour, over-fermented, turned, or tainted.<sup>23</sup>

Not only was Calvin's language simple, but his metaphors were as plain as the people before him. He despised fine speaking for the sake of fine speaking (*ars gratia artis*) but an eloquence subordinated to edification he constantly displayed. Humor was never far from his mind<sup>24</sup> and in the midst of solemn sermons he would complain of children crying;<sup>25</sup> of someone shooting crackers;<sup>26</sup> of sleepers in the congregation<sup>27</sup> and strollers outside.<sup>28 29</sup> Every word of the great preacher may have weighed a ton as his successor, Theodore Beza, wrote (*tot verba tot pondera*), but these were the words of the common man. If Calvin spoke as one having the authority of God's messenger, his other and equally distinguishing characteristic was his familiarity. Probably no preacher ever better combined authority and familiarity. "*La familiarité des sa parole n'a été égaleé que par son autorité.*"<sup>30</sup> His was familiarity which bred respect; his an authority that attracted.

Calvin, we may have guessed, was a chain preacher. He preached series after series and without series we hardly ever find Calvin preaching. He took the Bible, book after book, preaching 200 sermons on Deuteronomy, 342 on Isaiah; 159 on Job; 189 on Acts; 110 on First Corinthians. Usually he took a few verses at a time skipping none although expounding and applying some more fully than others. According to the simplicity of his purpose his usual transitions were, "We now come to;" or "in summary let us say;" or, "our next point is" and the like. No frills; Calvin could teach the Puritans something about "ye plaine style."

Bowman says that his sermons on the minor prophets took less than half an hour. However, this was not characteristic of all of his sermons. I made a rough count of the ones on Isaiah 53 and on II Samuel. The average number of words was about six and a quarter thousand. This would take about 25 typewritten pages, double-spaced. Even if Calvin's delivery were not slowed by the deliberateness of his purpose and his asthmatic breathing he would have been hard pressed to complete the sermon in less than an hour.

Be all this as it may nothing seems more characteristic of Calvin than his preaching. Nowhere do we see the man himself more clearly. Doumergue, who probably understood Calvin better than anyone who did

<sup>23</sup>Leroy Nixon, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum*, 74:767.

<sup>25</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum*, 49:512.

<sup>26</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum*, 49:426.

<sup>27</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum*, 76:638.

<sup>28</sup>*Corpus Reformatorum*, 54:123.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Mülhaupt, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 16.



not know him, said of the preaching Calvin, "That is the Calvin who seems to me to be the real and authentic Calvin."<sup>31</sup>

We may summarize the thesis of this paper in one sentence. John Calvin believed that the properly ordained and functioning minister speaks not for himself alone but is also the very voice of God; in consistency with which solemn fact the preacher should carefully and soundly exposit the Word of God, should do so in a way that people would readily understand for God speaks through his ministers primarily to move his people to godly action, and such speech is best done by an impromptu delivery and colloquial idiom.

Calvin's specific style of expository preaching has not greatly influenced the Calvinistic homiletical tradition. Perhaps that is good in some respects. However, when we consider what preaching has today become what a vast improvement would be the model of John Calvin! The two voice theory of preaching must be recovered, whether the specific methodology of Calvin in expressing it is or is not. A half century ago a young Frenchman named Edouard Pasquet presented a thesis to the faculty of Montauban entitled *Essai sur la prédication de Calvin*. It is a remarkable little work and none of it more interesting or pertinent today than the theses with which it concludes; with the citation of several at which I, too, conclude:

#### I

*Notre prédication, quoique plus oratoire et plus soignée que celle de Calvin, est loin d'être aussi puissante. Elle était populaire et la nôtre ne l'est pas.*

#### II

*Notre époque aurait besoin d'une prédication plus biblique, plus simple et moins académique.*

#### III

*La manière dont Calvin portait en chaire les questions de doctrine, est la plus pratique et la plus édifiante.*

#### IV

*Une réforme liturgique est certainement désirable, mais on s'exagère, en général, l'importance des résultats qu'elle pourrait avoir.*<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Quoted by Nixon, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup>Pasquet, *op. cit.*, p. 87.



## DOCTOR ZHIVAGO AND DOCTOR LUKE

THOMAS BOSLOOPER

The long appearance of the Russian novel *Doctor Zhivago* at the top of the nation's best seller list has given Boris Pasternak's masterpiece time to arouse the interest of the political, literary, cultural, and religious world. Since its first publication in Europe in 1954, it has created an international stir in major areas of human thought.

From a literary standpoint the book is outstanding since it combines both epic and lyric qualities. Within the slightly more than 500 pages of this book, the reader is taken through the first fifty years of the twentieth century in Russia—history marked by the Japanese-Russian War, World War I, the Revolution in Russia of the early '20's, World War II, and the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century. One moves out of the urban metropolitan Moscow, the very heart of what we think of as Russia, to the distant Ural Mountains. The reader is given the feeling of what it must be like for a city and the countryside to be buried under tons of snow or for homes to be overrun by hordes of rats. One gets the diverse impressions of tremendous expanses of the land and densities of forests. There are the storms of the natural world, of war, revolution, and human passions. There are the brilliant and crystal-like descriptions of cows and clouds, hares and horses, crackling fires in lifesaving hearths, and long lines of trains stalled and frozen in the snow. There are the people. Ignorant and arrogant, students and professors, the well-to-do and the destitute, soldiers and intellectuals, farmers and business men, reverent and impious. The body of the novel for the most part represents brilliant prose, and the poems at the close have classic dimension.

Politically Pasternak's novel is important, since out of Russia from behind the Iron Curtain by way of this book comes a declaration that the Communist state is not the epitome of Russian etiology. Here is a bold statement that because of the instincts and aspirations of the Russian people themselves something better will evolve out of Russia which will benefit not only that country, but the rest of mankind as well. The theory is presented that terrorism and typical Communist measures have developed in Russia in an attempt to conceal the error of the Communist Party and the failure of the political machine that is empowered to carry out its previously conceived plan. The title of the book is the name of the principal

character of the novel who is one who participates in the Red scheme, but is one who never accepts it and rebels against it.

The book has even more significance from the social and cultural standpoint. Not only does the author through his story and characters give a declaration opposed to Communism, but he also makes a critique on the whole organization of man. One of the themes of this novel is a revolt against the whole human system as the structure of society is now related to the individual. Pasternak's pen writes a scathing denunciation of all organizations, traditions, etiologies, and movements: religion, art, and science. The root of all evil in Russia which may be as well the root of evil in the world, according to the writer, is the loss of confidence in the value of one's own opinion. Elsewhere the author states the same fact in this way: salvation lies not in loyalty to forms, but in throwing them off. One must have, in addition to principles, a heart capable of violating them. Intellectual growth in the world has been stifled because intellectuals cling to dogmas of one form or another and are satisfied with words, superficialities, and slogans. Intelligent people employ rhetoric and act pompous. The majority of people are required to live a life of constant systematic duplicity which in turn affects their health by constantly placing them in situations where day by day they say the opposite of what they feel. The worth of life is to be found in one's wife, children, home, and work. Society is now so organized politically, economically, scientifically, and religiously that the finest personal expression of the individual in these basic relationships is thwarted. An important concept of the book is that this shall not continue to be so, but the individual in all his power and greatness shall rise—or that life shall be turned to him in such a way that he, the individual, will regain mastery of the human situation.

The author's philosophy of history is set forth in three ways. One of the most expressive is in terms of the storm. The storm appears throughout the book in vivid descriptions of the intensities of snow and of rain and the havoc which nature wreaks upon the face of the earth. This is not only a thread which runs through the book, but it is the mood or atmosphere upon which the whole dramatic action of the novel is based. As there are storms in the world of nature so are there storms in the life of man. Furthermore, destruction may be a natural and preliminary stage of a broad creative plan. It may be that society must fall completely to pieces in order that a truly revolutionary government will put the pieces together and build on completely new foundations. Here, then is a basically optimistic view and interpretation of the catastrophic element in both the natural and social worlds.

History is made analogous as well to the vegetable kingdom. History

has its winters of leafless branches and its springs of a beautiful leafy maze. As this is so in the world of the vegetable kingdom so is it true in the history of man. Furthermore, as there is constant motion, ceaseless change, and incessant transformation in the vegetable world so do the same processes occur in the human domain. This view considered along with the amount of literary detail drawn from the natural world and the author's great botanical and biological insights, demonstrate that the influence of Darwinism is strong upon him. Pasternak carried the analogy so far in Andreievich's life as to describe his closing years in terms of "going to seed."

A third philosophy of history is spelled out in terms of the characters of the novel. At the close of the book all of the principal characters are dead. The people of great personal power and prestige, the ones whose rise and fall have been followed throughout the pages of this moving story, have now passed from the human scene. This in itself is not significant, however. The significance lies in the fact that the ones who were minor characters throughout the book are now the remaining characters on the scene. The ones having a minor role throughout the novel now have a major role in life, and the major hope of the principal characters who are now dead comes alive again in the minor characters who remain. One such child was Tania, born out of the relationship of friendship between Laria and Yurii. Her existence was unknown to Yurii and her whereabouts unknown to Laria. However, she emerged as a new symbol of the times—one of unknown (to herself) origin and uncertain destiny, but filled with freshness and vitality of life in a new age.

The author elaborates the same truth in this way: "Immortality and resurrection are to be found in the 'still-living protagonists of this story, and their children'." This gives the minors, who have taken over the major role in times equally as perilous as their predecessors', a sense of tenderness and peace. Gordon and Dudorov, two of the "still-living protagonists," felt a sense of security as well as the tie between their generation and the past by means of a book which they had from the pen of the principal character of the novel and of the times, Doctor Zhivago—Yurii Andreievich. "And the book they held seemed to confirm and encourage their feeling." This is the final sentence of the novel and expresses another aspect of the third and possibly principal philosophy of history: values of life have immortality in their being conveyed through the ages by living descendants and literary works of former times.

*Doctor Zhivago* is also important in the history of Christianity. Many readers of the book are inclined to believe that the author proposes that a return to the teachings of Christ is the hope of the world. This is not

true. *Doctor Zhivago* is a critique of all existing organizational forms, which includes the Christian religion. This even includes the very teachings of Jesus. The only basis upon which the Christian faith and the theme of this Russian novel have anything in common is the importance of the individual. Christianity in the first century like this Russian novel in the twentieth century is a rallying call to the importance of the individual's rights in the world and to the necessity of the recognition of the dignity of every human being.

This and other biblical concepts in the novel, however, are given unbiblical interpretations. In the novel predestination is mentioned, but it is the predestination of fate rather than the predestination of the biblical faith. The birth of Jesus is described, but the story of the birth of Jesus, rather than depicting a unique saviour of the world, is used as a symbolic description of the greatness of every individual that is born into the world. In the poems at the conclusion of the novel the biblical concept of resurrection is treated, but the meaning and significance is the opposite of the concept as outlined on the pages of the New Testament. In the Russian novel resurrection is a symbol to declare the faith in the ultimate vindication of the individual in the sense that "the centuries and life 'return to me'," rather than the biblical concept of the person returning to God or being united in that fullness which is Christ.

From the standpoint of the importance of human and personal love *Doctor Zhivago* appears to be Christian and according to the teachings of Christ, but at the point of expression of this love the Russian novel and the New Testament part company. Yurii Andreievich, the hero of the piece, was married to one woman by whom he had a son and was separated from them by the exigencies of the revolutions. The fortunes of war united Yurii with a friend of his youth with whom he lived and shared his "love." Upon his return to Moscow he lived with another woman who bore him two children. Throughout this process it is obvious that he in a sense loved and was devoted to all three of these women although he married only the first, and the declaration is clear in his relationship to the second one, Laria, that she in turn loved both her husband and him. By the time that Yurii Andreievich dies, his wife is living in another part of the world, Laria has been removed to a concentration camp, and the woman who has most recently borne him children is left to carry on as best she can in Moscow. All of this illustrates the difference between the Russian concepts of "individuality" and "love" and the Christian spirit and ethic.

In spite of these criticisms there is a parallel between this Russian novel and the New Testament. If they do not coincide in content or in spirit, at least they are parallel in the type of role they play in history.

Both this book which emerged from behind the Iron Curtain and the four Gospels which emerged from the heart of the Christian community call importance to the individual, plead for newness of life, and protest against a society which clings to old forms and traditions and continues to put new patches of cloth on old garments. Pasternak like Jesus demands that religious people take a good look at themselves. He challenges them to remove all of the masks of pretensions, arrogance, and prejudices.

The parallel is precisely at the point of one of the authors of the New Testament writings and two books for which he was responsible. There are peculiar parallels between the chief character of the Russian novel, Doctor Zhivago, and Doctor Luke. In the novel it is described how in some moments Yurii Andreievich felt that the main part of the work which he did was not being done by him, but by a superior power which was above him and which directed him. He thought of this power in terms of "the movement of universal thought and poetry in its present historical stage and the one to come." Furthermore, he felt himself to be "only the occasion, the fulcrum, needed to make this movement possible" (page 437). Doctor Luke like Doctor Zhivago felt not only the compelling power of a superior force but also sensed the necessity of a continued new expression and re-evaluation of the most cherished attitudes and ambitions of mankind. Even though the account of Jesus' life and ministry had been recorded on previous occasions, the author of the third Gospel believed it necessary and desirable to set forth the same ideas "again" or "anew." The author of the third Gospel more than any other author of a biography of the Lord Jesus Christ called attention to the humanity of Jesus and to his relationship to other human beings in so far as both his family and associates were concerned. The Russian novel has poetry at its conclusion. The third Gospel opens with sections of poetry. Each has both superlative prose and poetic qualities. Each shows a keen sensitivity to the needs of mankind, particularly women, and one cannot read either without realizing that the author is a great humanitarian.

Notice, too, that the author of the third Gospel continued his writing in what we now call the Acts of the Apostles. This two-volume work sets forth the life of Jesus and the origin of the early church. In the first work we notice the importance of the individual under God and in the second we notice the importance of fellowship according to the Spirit of God. Thus, Doctor Luke deals with the same basic themes which were dealt with by Boris Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago*. One cannot help but notice immediately, however, the difference in the spirit and attitude which is conveyed.

One of the reasons why a novel like *Doctor Zhivago* becomes necessary in the twentieth century and speaks not only to the social, political,

and economic conditions behind the Iron Curtain, but to the cultural and religious situation throughout the world as well, is that the message of Doctor Luke given centuries ago has been forgotten and neglected. Instead of the individual human personality flourishing under the spirit of Christian fellowship the individual Christian has become involved in a milieu of traditions, dogmas, and customs. As Edwin T. Dahlberg, president of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America, recently stated in an editorial in the National Council magazine: "We revere classic architecture, classic hymnology, and the accepted vocabulary of the faith, dim in vision; crippled by tradition, we become curators rather than creators." The church has substituted tradition, organization, and administration for genuine faith, friendship, and Christian fellowship.

One of the chief reactions which the public has to the reading of *Doctor Zhivago* is that it must be read several times. The comment will frequently be made: "I have read the book twice and several months from now I hope to read it again." This phenomenon is so because of the beauty, penetration of thought, and depth of perception which the book displays, all of which cannot be grasped or contained in one reading. If this is so for a modern novel, good and important as it may be, how much more so this ought to be for a canonical piece of literature. Think of the immeasurable good which would come from repeated and continuous readings of the Gospel according to St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles! No one will ever understand the complete message of these two books in one reading. But how many have read them even once in their entirety? How great would be the spiritual benefit to all mankind and in particular to the heart of the Christian if these volumes of Scripture would be read with an intensity and interest equal to that which is given to modern literature. If after coming away from a reading of the Gospel and the Acts, a reader would say, "I don't understand that, I didn't quite get those chapters, I'm not sure what the author was trying to say," and then he would determine to read and reread these passages and the books themselves, how much more genuine and sincere he would appear not only as a human being, but also as a Christian!

*Doctor Zhivago* is a great book and makes a substantial contribution to world literature. It is hoped that another one of its benefits may be to rally the Christian community to a rereading of its own "Doctor" and to have restored in its heart the message which he would convey to the world.

## THE ABSOLUTENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

HENRY STOB

I shall undertake to speak to you this morning on *The Absoluteness of Christianity*. As you may suspect, I shall maintain that Christianity is the one absolute and final religion, the only way that leads from man to God, since it is concerned with the single way in which God confronts man redemptively, the Way called Christ, who himself once said: "I am the way . . . , no man cometh to the Father but by me."

Before I proceed, however, I must indicate what I mean by the terms Christianity and Absolute. By *Christianity* I mean that sacred deposit of Grace and Truth which came in Jesus Christ, was anticipated in God's saving dealings with His chosen people Israel, was proclaimed by the Apostles, and is preserved in the Church, which communicates it through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

By the *absoluteness* of Christianity is meant that quality of this religion which lifts it above the relativities of time and circumstance and gives it final and unconditional validity. The English word "absolute" is derived from the participial form of the Latin verb *ab-solvere*, to be "cut loose," or to be "set free." In the theological and philosophical usage the word is frequently used to describe *God*, or the highest power or principle which is taken as God, and when so used it is employed to indicate that this Person or Principle is not dependent upon or conditioned by the complexities of finite existence: He or It is "free" of flux and process, raised above the changes of time and history, "cut loose" from the determinants which condition all other entities.

### THE PROBLEM

Now, there are some thinkers who refuse to predicate *absoluteness* of God, for to predicate absoluteness of God is, they believe, to conceive of him deistically, as out of all relation to history, as uninvolved in our problems and pains, as out of touch with our experiences. The Absolute God is, in their view, the Wholly-Other God. This God, they say, is a non-existent, certainly a non-existential God, the figment of the philosopher's imagination and they refuse to acknowledge him, preferring instead an immanent God who is joined with us in our struggles on the concrete plane of history.



If there are some who refuse to predicate absoluteness of God, there are more who refuse to predicate it of religion, and by that token, of the Christian religion. Religion, they observe, is precisely what is *not* cut loose from process and the relativities of our existence. Religion, they point out, is a human affair, and like everything human, it is finite, imperfect, partial, changeable. How then, they ask, since Christianity is a religion, can anyone speak of it as absolute? It is temporal; it arose in *time* and is even now in process. Being relative it is *essentially* no different than any other religion. It may differ from other religions *accidentally*, in measure or degree, but at bottom it is as conditioned by time and circumstance as they are; it has no monopoly of truth or grace; it is not the only, the absolute, the final, the definitive religion. It may be the religion best suited to some men, and even the highest and best religion yet conceived, but it is not absolute.

What are we to say to this? Is there not force in these anti-absolutistic remarks? Is it, for example, not true that Christianity arose at a definite time and place; that its sacred books reflect the mind and spirit of the Jewish people, modified by the philosophical ideas elaborated by the Greeks and transmitted by the Romans; and that its institutions and practices express the genius of the Northern European peoples? Is Christianity not essentially Western in nature, and if not Western, then Near-Eastern or Semitic? And is it not on that account limited, partial, particular—ill-suited to other places and peoples, and even to other times?

Adolph Hitler thought so. Under the tutelage of Friedrich Nietzsche and Alfred Rozenberg he came to ascribe Europe's ills to the superimposition upon the Nordic race of a Semitic religion entirely out of accord with the deepest impulses of the Aryan spirit and he resolutely opposed Christianity as well as Jewry in the interest, he thought, of restoring Europe's spiritual health and saving it from religious schizophrenia. And was not Hitler right? Isn't it the duty of an awakened nationalism and a self-conscious racism to throw off, not indeed religion, but a non-indigenous religion which arrogantly exercises, as it has historically fostered, a culture-destroying spiritual imperialism? Should not different people, in different countries, in different historical contexts, find their own way to God and develop a religion suited to their own peculiar needs and circumstances? And will not political co-existence and international peace come into being and flourish only when on the spirituo-religious level extravagant and self-preferential claims are dropped and each is allowed in utter freedom to pursue his own spiritual destiny? Or, if in one world, one single religion is to weld all peoples together by the power of one spiritual force, must not this religion be an amalgam of the best in all religions, a synthesis of the religious insights of the



entire race, and not the expression of a narrow and intolerant particularism?

The *Laymen's Appraisal* of thirty years ago, which was set down in a book called *Rethinking Missions*, thought so. In this book Jesus is regarded as no more than the world's most eminent religious genius. Jesus was a fellow-seeker with us after God, and we bear his name because in our quest of God we follow his lead. Christianity is not a religion *about* Christ but the religion *of* Christ. To ascribe an absolute finality to Christianity is to give expression to a spiritual arrogance entirely foreign to the spirit of the Master. Christianity is an ethical system which ought to be generously proffered to enquiring people, but it is not a way of salvation that must be urged upon people as an alternative to eternal death. The central aim and purpose of Christian missions is to serve men, not to change or rescue them. Too long, it is complained, have we regarded conversions as the zenith of missionary achievement, and a soul as a kind of spiritual scalp in our wigwam. We must remember that we are commissioned not to rob other people of their faith, but to "assist them to a truer interpretation of their own meaning." Christian missions are not proselyting agencies but only means of coming to terms with the ethnic religions. What the missionary asks of non-Christian peoples is not repentance and conversion, but greater depth or consistency in the practice of their native faith, for it is not only at Jerusalem nor only on Mt. Gerizim that God may be served, but on every way men walk in sincerity and uprightness, whether in the company of Gautama, Confucius, or Jesus. What can we say to this?

### SCRIPTURE

The first thing we can say is that this is not the view entertained of Christianity in the Bible, which for us is the inspired and infallible rule of faith and practice, and which, on any theory of inspiration must be taken as an authoritative source of Christian teaching. The Bible clearly teaches not merely the superiority but also the exclusive validity of the Christian Way.

In John 14:6 Christ says of himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father except through me." In the light of this pronouncement the command of Christ in Matthew 28:18-20 stands forth in all its authority and urgency. Christ here proclaims himself Lord of the world, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth"; the one Lord whose imperious claim on men's lives, though gracious, is comprehensive and unending, "even unto the end of the world."

This understanding of Christ animates the preaching of the Apostles, as can be seen, for example, from Peter's sermons in Acts. In Acts

2:36, 38 we read, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. . . . [Wherefore] repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." And why repent and flee to Christ? The answer is given in Acts 4:12, ". . . in none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

Because this is so, Paul, who determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified, could say in Gal. 1:8, "Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Paul, it is evident, regarded the gospel as final.

### THEOLOGY

The reason the Christian Gospel is absolute and final is that its content, Jesus Christ, is absolute. As John tells us in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Wherefore Jesus said in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." Jesus Christ is no mere prophet; he is certainly no mere hero or genius; he is not a spark struck off the human block; he is not man reaching up to God. He is God identifying himself with man; he represents an incursion into this world from another world; he is God incarnate. In him God has come to men completely, fully, finally. There cannot be a revelation beyond this revelation. In Jesus Christ we have the absolute God standing in the most intimate relation to mankind without himself being thereby relativized. Here is Eternity standing in time yet not being temporalized. Here is the Other becoming the same, and yet not losing his otherness. Here is Finality in touch with process and giving it the only meaning it has.

What is true of Christ's person is true of his *work*. He came for one purpose only: To reconcile man to God. And since the reconciliation could be effected in one way only, it may be said that he came to die. To this end was he born. And when he died and arose again there was accomplished what need not and could not ever be done again. At the Cross and on Easter the power of sin was forever broken, the sting was taken out of death, and the grave was robbed of its victory. About the finality or once-for-allness of Christ's work the Scriptures do not leave us in doubt. Paul says in Romans 6:10: "For in that he died, he died unto sin *once*." Peter says in I Peter 3:18: "For Christ also hath *once* suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And the author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* says in 9:26, 28, but now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the

sacrifice of himself . . . . So Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many."

### RELIGION

Because Christianity is concerned with the person and work of Christ it is final and absolute. Christianity is not a way of man to God (then it would be temporary and relative), but an account of God's dealing with men and of man's graciously initiated response to the divine activity. As such it is unique, distinguishing itself from all other religions, every one of which is the product of man's search after God while in flight from him or in rebellion against him. Christianity therefore must be radically distinguished from every ethnic faith. To all such faiths it stands in a relation of antithesis. With none of them can it come to terms or be combined. It cannot even be embraced with them in a comparative study such as is undertaken in the *discipline* called Comparative Religions. It cannot be embraced with non-Christian faiths in a comparative study because such a study invariably makes the comparison in terms of a standard other than and beyond the entities compared. Reference is invariably made to an abstract essence called religion, of which both Christianity and the other faiths are considered partial exemplifications. True religion is then regarded as a genus of which Christianity and the other religions are species. But this the Christian will not allow. Christianity is not a particular and therefore partial manifestation of an essence other than itself. It is itself the very essence of religion, and all other "religions" are so-called because of their negative relation to it, because of their defection and apostasy from the true worship of God restored in Christianity. Non-Christian "religions" are strictly speaking no religions at all, just as heathen "gods" are strictly speaking no gods at all. There is only one God, and there is only one religion, in the absolute sense. The God is Jehovah, who is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another, nor his praise unto graven images (Isa. 42:8). The religion is Christianity, which is set over against all other so-called religions and is concerned to unmask them as hinderings of the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18-25), while calling their adherents on to the knowledge and fellowship of the one true God.

### ANTITHESIS

Christianity in its uniqueness and absoluteness is set over against the ethnic faiths, but it is important to understand just wherein this antithesis resides. I suggest that what are set-over-against each other in the antithesis are not, primarily, two histories, nor two lives, nor even two theologies, but rather two principles, the principles of Sin and Grace.

1. The antithesis in all its radicality is not between two concrete

*historical entities*, between historic Christianity and, for example, historic Buddhism. The history of these two magnitudes is governed to a large degree by common factors. Each is in great part the product of cultural, economic, political, and generally human causes and influences. In respect of these influences each may be compared to the other and subjected to a single analysis. Because they lie on the plane of history these two religions change their aspects with the times, and are at different times more or less true to themselves; the course described by each is not steady and linear, but full of ups and downs, of defections and reformations. On this plane Christianity as well as Buddhism stands under judgment, for it is here not only affected by the relativities of finite existence but also by human depravity.

2. The antithesis is also not, in the most radical sense, between two *lives*. A recognition of this fact will keep us from making a comparison of the behavior of a Buddhist and a Christian, and save us from the embarrassment which often attends such a comparison. It is a well-known fact that non-Christians are often more dedicated to their faith, more meticulous in their observance of their duties, more willing to sacrifice their private interests than is the Christian. There is always the noble pagan to shame the Christian. In this situation it must be remembered that it is no part of Christianity to say that our lives are better than those of the heathen. It is, as Christians, not our virtue we confess but our sins and weakness. We confess that we are unclean and undone, and this is not merely a pious mouthing but a declaration of literal truth. We acknowledge that we are not so much good as *declared* good in the juridical act of justification. And even when, through God's sanctifying Spirit, our lives are radiant with love, our failings are there to temper our pride, and to keep us from boasting or making odious comparisons. It is forever un-Christian to say "Lord, I thank thee that I am not like that publican." A recognition of this general truth will keep us, too, from intellectual confusion. It will help us unmask as pseudo-philosophy much discussion as to whether there is any knowledge or any virtue among the unbelievers. Of course there is such knowledge and virtue, and on the empirical level it often exceeds our own.

3. The antithesis is also in its deepest sense not between two *theologies*. Theologies, too, are human products, inevitably influenced by natural and human factors, which render them imperfect, changeable, criticizable. Theologies, including Christian theologies, lie in the judgment as well as human lives and historical institutions. Although against Barth we must maintain that there actually exist what he calls the "Blessed Possessors," yet it will never do to identify our theological constructions with the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, for then we cut off every possibility

of reformation, and make ourselves guilty of a spurious absolutism. It should also be observed that on the level of theological reflection the antithesis is modified by the fact that Christian theology and *theologia-falsa* employ common intellectual instruments (methods and categories), and address themselves to much the same problems. A good illustration of this is found in the theological work in Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries, when, with a common appeal to Aristotle, Christian and Moham-medan alike were fashioning different theologies around a common set of problems, such as the authority of sacred Scripture, the relation between predestination and free will, the bearing of philosophy upon theology and vice-versa, and the relative value of Scripture and Tradition.

4. The antithesis that exists between Christianity and non-Christian religions is effected by the supernatural and absolute power of grace which is mediated to the world through Jesus Christ and his Spirit and through no one else. This grace which separates men and cuts the human race in two, was promised (and indeed imparted) in the early dawn of human history, soon after man yielded to the temptation of the devil and fell away from God. By that fall man came into the power of sin, from which there is no final release except through a counter-power, the power of grace, which God released in pre-Christian times in view of Christ's sacrificial death and in Christian times upon the basis of that sacrifice. Through grace there is called out of the mass of men those who by faith in Christ's name are saved from condemnation and ushered into life. And between those who are thus called out and those who remain under judgment there is a great gulf fixed, a gulf that none can cross unaided. And those on either side are very different, the one being in Christ, the other being outside of Christ; the one alive, the other dead; the one standing in the light, the other being in darkness; the one living from the principle of grace; the other from the principle of sin. Now, insofar as the term "Christianity" means the vehicle and expression of grace (and this is what it centrally *does* mean) it stands opposed to other religions as light to darkness, life to death, salvation to condemnation, for other religions, though they could not exist without the indelible sense of God impressed upon the soul, are nevertheless expressions of man's determination to serve not the one true God but only some creature that God has made; and from such creatures, who themselves are alienated from God, no way can be found that leads to God and blessedness. There is only one way to God, the way laid by God himself—his only begotten Son, the Savior of the world—the way upon which Christians walk, the way which, if one walk upon it, one *is* a Christian, an adherent of the Christian religion, a member of the Christian Church. The Christian Way is therefore unique, absolute, incomparable, for it is Christ himself, very

God of very God. This, then, is what we mean when we say that Christianity is absolute, and opposed antithetically to all other religions.

What does this mean for our understanding of religion in general, and for non-Christian religions in particular?

It means, negatively, that, standing within the perspective of Christianity, we cannot take the phenomena of the non-Christian religions as the key to the meaning of religion or to the meaning of the religious life, but rather that this key must be found exclusively in the revelation set down in the Christian Scriptures, the Bible, by whose light alone man and his works can be truly understood. It means, too, that we cannot regard non-Christian religions evolutionistically as approaches or stepping stones to Christianity. They are rather deviations from Christianity, lapses from the true religion, movements away from truth and beatitude. They are at bottom *false*, being animated centrally by the sinful rejection of God's right to define himself and to prescribe how he should be worshipped. It also means, therefore, that we do not represent Christianity as merely different than non-Christian religions, but rather as radically *other* than these religions, it being true, the others false—remembering always that this is a judgment of faith, and not empirically verifiable, and remembering too that since it is a judgment of faith it will give offense to those who stand outside the faith. It means finally that we are obliged to press the non-Christian worshipper, not merely for improvement, but for *repentance* and for a decision to break with his false gods.

If the true nature of all religions is disclosed within the perspective of the Christian religion, this enables us not only to pass a negative judgment upon non-Christian religions, but it also enables us to *explain* the characteristic *complexity* of these religions, to explain that curious play of lights and shadows which is such an undeniable feature of their existence. For though all religions, other than the religion of Christ, are false at the center, displeasing to God, and unable to save, there is yet in them an unwitting acknowledgement of God, there is power in some of them to raise the level of men's moral behavior and they keep alive in men's consciousness the reality of the Unseen. They are so far forth a protest against atheism, immorality, and radical secularism. Now, far from denying that these features exist in ethnic religions, Christianity calls our attention to them and provides us with the principles in terms of which to account for their existence. There are at least four such principles disclosed in Scripture. They are:

1. The *sensus divinitatis* or the *cognitio dei innata*— an inner, unquenchable awareness of God, owing to man's being made in God's image, and retaining it in the broader sense in spite of all the ravages of sin.

2. *General Revelation*—a display in nature and history of God's

might and divinity, a display which does not entirely escape the notice of sinful men, for the reason that God's display or revelation of himself is always effectual after its kind. The power of sin which reigns in the heart of the unregenerate is not strong enough to shut God out. His witness still comes through the barrier of their resistance, and, though non-Christians try to suppress, and fundamentally misinterpret what God is saying, they do apprehend something of him, and what they apprehend is recognized by the Christian to be of value.

3. *Common Grace*—a disposition and power of God which, without working regeneration and salvation, arrests the power of sin to blind and destroy, and gives good gifts to the rebellious.

4. *Special Revelation*—which appears in non-Christian religions in a two-fold way: *First*, as a *borrowing* from the Jewish and Christian faiths. A good example of this is Mohammedanism, many of whose brighter spots are owing to a kind of orientation to Old and New Testaments. Other examples are found in certain reform movements in Hinduism.—*Special Revelation* appears in non-Christian religions, *secondly*, as a *memory* or tradition, a memory dim and distorted of the original revelation to Adam in Paradise, and to himself and his descendants before the formation of God's special people Israel.

When once we have gotten these principles and facts in view, when once we give due weight to the innate sense of God, general revelation, common grace, and the indelible memory of God's dealings with men before the separation of his chosen people, then we will understand that it is contrary to both fact and Scripture to regard the ethnic faiths as (simplistically) *nothing but* the outworkings of sin, *nothing but* the work of Satan. There is grace in them too—not saving grace, and there is no salvation in them—but grace nevertheless, the presence of which is, of course, not an occasion to congratulate the sinner, but to magnify the Lord.

It is this complexity which makes true on the one hand the declaration of Paul in Romans 8:7 that "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and on the other that the sinner in some sense is a seeker after God, being restless until he rests in him, as we learn from Acts 17:27, "that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him."

We see, accordingly, that Christianity is both the *denial* of the ethnic faiths and the fulfillment of them. It is a rejection of them, and an answer to their questions. It is this complex relationship which gives significance to the missionary enterprise.

Missionary work is *necessary* because the natural man is lost, without Christ, no man being able to be saved by even the most diligent observance of the prescriptions of the ethnic faiths.

And missionary work is *possible* because God has been beforehand with the people to whom the missionary addresses the Gospel, and has provided a living point of contact for him.



## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY<sup>1</sup> IN NEW BRUNSWICK TO THE CHURCH IN THE WEST,<sup>2</sup> 1850-1884

ELTON BRUINS

During the centennial celebration of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1884, Professor Charles Scott of Hope College, Holland, Michigan, recalled a significant conversation with Albertus C. Van Raalte, leader of the mid-nineteenth century Dutch immigration to Michigan:

Once I heard the venerable Dr. Van Raalte, in an evening conversation, relate the tearful history of the Holland immigration to this land in which they now dwell. He told how they left the loved homes of their fathers, and the fair surroundings of the Netherlands, and suffered in the forests of Michigan. I can repeat almost his very words: "Our deepest anxiety was for the ecclesiastical connections, and the educational needs of these immigrants. Oh, it was upon my heart as a leaden weight, for I so felt my responsibility before God. One of my first missions was to the Theological Seminary at New Brunswick. I listened to the teachings and conversations of the Professors, saw the workings of their heart, and understood their love to God and their devotion to His truth. I blessed my God that I there found the faith of my fathers—the historical Church of the Netherlands—and because I found it, and loved it, I determined to bring the immigrants into intimate connection with the Dutch Reformed Church in America."

Professor Scott's comments following that statement of Van Raalte were:

Well did Dr. Van Raalte fulfil that promise . . . . When Holland Academy was founded, its first principal went from New Brunswick;<sup>3</sup> himself and his two assistant teachers, Thompson and Van De Wall, were graduates of this Institution.

When Dr. Phelps organized Hope College, in 1866, he gathered around him, as a Faculty, Oggel,<sup>4</sup> Beck, Crispell, and Scott, and everyone of them will be found upon the catalogue of our Theological Seminary.<sup>5</sup>

Professor Scott has indicated clearly one of the benefits the Reformed Church in America has received from her seminary at New Brunswick,

<sup>1</sup>The seminary is now known as the New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

<sup>2</sup>The church in the West is a general reference to all church extension and growth west of the Alleghenies but in this article it has special reference to the Classis of Holland (Michigan) and the Dutch churches in Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

<sup>3</sup>John Van Vleck.

<sup>4</sup>Pieter J. Oggel, but there is no reference to him in the *Biographical Record*, 1934, of the Seminary.

<sup>5</sup>*Centennial of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America* (formerly Ref. Prot. Dutch Church), New York, 1885, pp. 252-53.

New Jersey, which is celebrating her 175th anniversary this year. Her primary mission throughout her entire history has been to educate the ministerial students of the Reformed Church. Rather than sending the students to the Netherlands for theological education and ordination as she did in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the American Dutch Church began to educate her sons for the ministry after the founding of the theological professorate in 1784. The seminary which grew out of that action was destined to play a larger part in the life of the church than either John H. Livingston, the first professor, or the other founders of the school realized.

The seminary was already sixty-six years old in 1850, the year in which the Classis of Holland (Michigan) united with the Reformed Church in America (then known as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in North America). The church in the colony of Holland, Michigan, under the leadership of Albertus Christian Van Raalte, became an organic part of the Dutch Church in America which was founded in 1628. This union was particularly beneficial to the immigrant churches in Michigan, even though a few churches did not think so and later seceded.

One of the particular benefits was receiving the help of the graduates of the seminary at New Brunswick for the educational ventures in the colony in Michigan. After the "ecclesiastical connections" were made, the "educational needs of these immigrants" were deeply felt. Dr. John Garretson, Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions, drew up a plan for a high school after discussing the educational needs with Van Raalte in 1850, "to prepare [the] sons of the colonists from Holland for Rutgers College, and also to educate daughters of said colonists."<sup>6</sup> The pioneer school began its work in 1851 under the leadership of Walter T. Taylor, a former elder from the Reformed Church in Geneva, New York. When the pioneer school became an academy in 1854, the Rev. F. P. Beidler headed the school for one year. In the following year, the Rev. John Van Vleck, who graduated from the seminary in 1855, took over the work. He was later joined in the task of education by Abraham Thompson and Giles Vande Wall. Thompson came to the school upon graduation from Rutgers College in 1857 and Vande Wall who graduated from the Seminary in 1856, began teaching in 1858. After the departure of Van Vleck in 1859, Philip Phelps, pastor of the Reformed Church in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, took over the work of the academy. The academy became a college under his leadership in 1862, graduating the first class in 1866. His co-workers were the Rev.

<sup>6</sup>*A Manual of the Reformed Church in America*, by Edward Tanjore Corwin, fourth edition, New York, 1922, pp. 192ff.

P. J. Oggel and the Rev. Thomas Romeyn Beck. The Rev. Charles Scott and the Rev. Cornelius E. Crispell also joined the faculty before 1866. With the exception of Taylor and Beidler and possibly Oggel, the faculty of the grammar school, academy, and college from 1850 to 1866 were graduates of the seminary of the Reformed Church at New Brunswick. The benefit of the union of 1850 to the colonists was that they could tap the educational resources of the old Dutch church which had been in America for many years. If the school in Holland had not been able to draw from that abundant resource, it would have been likely that the school of Van Raalte's dreams would have remained a dream instead of becoming a reality.

Not only were the educational ventures in the immigrant colony able to draw upon the seminary at New Brunswick for teachers, but they were also able to send their own sons there until the Western Theological Seminary was able to educate them in the West. Many ministers came with the colonists to America, such as Albertus Van Raalte and Cornelius Vander Meulen, but the supply was inadequate. An immediate problem that confronted the colonists was the number of churches without ministers. The desperate need for pastors was met partly in allowing some men, as Adrian Zwemer and G. J. Nykerk, to study with John Van Vleck at the academy. The Classis of Holland conceded that this was a short cut to gain an educated ministry but the concessions were made because they were married men with families and because churches needed pastors badly.

As the colony was fortunate in getting New Brunswick graduates to serve in their midst as teachers, the colonists soon began to send their sons to New Brunswick for their theological training. The colonists were able to gain benefits from an institution that had taken years to come into being. From 1737 to 1784, the American Dutch church literally fought for the establishment of a theological professorate in order to train their sons in America. It then took a period of time, from the election of John H. Livingston as the Professor of Theology in 1784 until the establishment of the school in New Brunswick in 1810, for the school to succeed. However, in 1858, when the first son of Cornelius Vander Meulen went east for his theological training, the seminary had a new divinity building given by Mrs. Anna Hertzog in 1856 and was about to begin one of its most flourishing periods as a seminary. Three professors were teaching in the school: Samuel A. Van Vranken, professor of theology, William H. Campbell, professor of biblical literature, and Samuel Woodbridge, professor of pastoral theology, ecclesiastical history, and church government. The pioneer immigrants were able to send their sons to an institution which had taken years to come to fruition and into real-

ity. The Dutch colonists of the nineteenth century did not have the problem that faced the Dutch colonists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The nineteenth century colonists found an institution ready-made to educate their sons for the ministry.

A goodly number of the sons of the pioneers came to New Brunswick between 1850 and 1884. Jacob Baay graduated in 1860, Roelof Pieters, Jacob Vander Meulen, and Christian Van Der Veen in 1861, John Vander Meulen in 1862. Roelof Pieters became one of the distinguished men of the church in the West. John Karsten, who graduated in 1863, served many churches in the West and also served for a time as editor of *De Hope*. Egbert Winter, '63 and Henry E. Dosker, '79 became professors in the Western Theological Seminary. Ame Vennema, '82 was president of Hope College, 1911-1918. As far as it can be ascertained, twenty-nine men who were sons of the pioneers graduated from the seminary before 1884.<sup>7</sup> Even though theological instruction began at Hope College in 1866, students continued to come from the West and even after the founding of the Western Theological Seminary in 1884, such men as Samuel and Peter Zwemer attended New Brunswick Seminary.

The theological seminary at New Brunswick also proved to be of tremendous help to the church in the West in regard to theological education in another way. After the first college class was graduated in 1866, the pleas came to the General Synod to allow some graduating students to pursue theological instruction at Hope College. Permission was granted. Charles E. Crispell, who was already teaching there, was elected Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Hope College. The arrangements were provisional, however. The General Synod assumed no financial obligation to the new venture. Professors Beck and Scott were appointed "lectors" in branches of theological training. The need for theological education was felt to be necessary in the West by Dr. Phelps, president of the college, as well as by students. The urge for theological education in the West did not develop because the seminary in New Brunswick was thought to be inadequate or unsound doctrinally.<sup>8</sup> Sons of the pioneers were already attending that school. Distance was a factor but it was undoubtedly felt by Phelps and others that western churches for various reasons needed theological instruction for their sons on home grounds. Unfortunately, theological instruction in the West had to be discontinued from 1877 until 1884 because of the financial depression. When the financial picture improved in 1884, the church in

<sup>7</sup>Information from the *Biographical Record*, 1934, compiled by John Howard Raven.

<sup>8</sup>"Let Us Remember. . .," an historical address delivered by Dr. Albertus Pieters, at the semi-centennial of the reopening of theological instruction at Holland, Michigan, printed in *The Theolog*, October, 1935, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 12.

the West again turned to the theological seminary at New Brunswick for their graduates to serve as professors. Among the five men who served as professors and lectors of Western Seminary in its early years, John W. Beardslee, Henry E. Dosker, and Egbert Winter were graduates of the New Brunswick Seminary. Dr. Beardslee served from 1888 until 1917 and gave a long, significant ministry of teaching to the seminary in the West. Just as the success of Hope College was dependent upon an adequate faculty, the same was true for Western Seminary. Due to the fact that the Western church could tap the ministry educated at New Brunswick, she was able to meet the needs for theological education in the West.

A by-product which was gained from the theological training at the seminary in New Brunswick was the missionary spirit at the school of the prophets. The colonists in Michigan had a missionary fervor at the time they settled. They possibly would have gone to Java if the Dutch government had not prevented missionary activity among the natives.<sup>9</sup> The First Reformed Church of Holland already decided in 1851 that fifteen per cent of the church money be designated for missions. This missionary spirit was enhanced by the knowledge of the interest in missions at the theological seminary. While Jacob Vander Meulen and Roelof Pieters were attending the seminary, they witnessed the departure of three seminary graduates who sailed for India and China in 1859.<sup>10</sup> In 1860, five of the students offered themselves for foreign missionary service, including James Ballagh and John Scudder.<sup>11</sup> This undoubtedly made an impression upon Pieters.

Roelof Pieters carried back to the colony the mission spirit in the East. Before the Classis of Holland in 1863 he said: "The Reformed Church cannot stand before God, with her Confession and the heathen world to be measured with Heaven's yardstick, unless she be a standard-bearer in the cause of Missions."<sup>12</sup> The sermon was printed and circulated widely. Van Eyck<sup>13</sup> claimed that Philip Phelps was the originator of the plan to build a ship in Holland for use in foreign mission service. The year following Pieters' address, a keel was laid for a mission ship. At the keel-laying service John Van Nest Talmadge, '45, a missionary to China, spoke. The mission spirit of the leaders of the colony was aided and

<sup>9</sup>*A Dutch Settlement in Michigan*, by Aleida J. Pieters, The Reformed Press, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1923, p. 126.

<sup>10</sup>*The Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in North America*, convened in the city of Albany, N. Y., June, 1859, p. 448.

<sup>11</sup>*The Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod*. . . convened in [the] city of Philadelphia, Pa., June, 1860, p. 484.

<sup>12</sup>*Landmarks of the Reformed Fathers or What Dr. Van Raalte's People Believed*, by William O. Van Eyck, The Reformed Press, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1922, p. 83.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 308-9.

abetted by the graduates of the theological seminary who served the church in the West.

The "Church in the West," which is now a strong part of the Reformed Church in America, an area that now claims one seminary and three colleges, salutes the theological seminary at New Brunswick in her 175th anniversary year. Her contributions to the western church during the period of 1850 to 1884 is a significant chapter in her history.

## CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS

The first quarter has been an exceedingly full one on Western's campus. Activities have been wide and varied and the school year is off to a fine start. On September 25, the annual Fall Reception was given by the faculty. Professor M. E. Oosterhaven presided and Professor L. J. Kuyper presented an excellent series of slides on the Holy Land.

On October 27, and 28, Dr. John T. Mc Neill, Emeritus Professor of Church History at Union Theological Seminary, New York City a well-known author of several books, among them *The History and Character of Calvinism*, delivered two lectures on John Calvin, the first entitled, "John Calvin, Ecumenical Churchman," and the second "Calvin's View of Economics." The lectures were most stimulating and appropriate in this year of special Calvin celebration.

The Adelphic program has featured a wide variety of interesting subjects, among them, Professor Kuyper's slides of the Holy Land along with pertinent information on the Middle East situation, a film on mixed marriage, a discussion of the relation of boy scouts to the Church, a presentation of the work of Pine Rest Sanatorium by the Rev. William L. Hiemstra, an address on the nature of the ministry

by Dr. G. McClellan representing the National Council of Churches.

One of the biggest events of the year at Western is the annual Goyim Missionary Drive which was held this year on November 3. The project which the student body adopted this year was a "Chapel in the Hills" for Buncomb, Kentucky. On October 21, the Rev. Ray Hays addressed the seminary on the work in that field. He was very warmly received and the drive was off to a good start. On the day of the drive the students and faculty gathered for a breakfast in the Commons and the Rev. Gordon L. Van Oostenburg spoke on the challenge of missions and then led in a season of prayer. A potluck dinner was held at night and following the meal the Rev. Henry Jager, formerly of Gray Hawk, Kentucky, spoke on the work there. The evening was climaxed when the Rev. Jay Weener presented the opportunity of pledging support for the Buncomb Chapel. The response was most gratifying as up to the present time \$5,400.00 has already been pledged. Students and faculty praise God for this experience.

A new innovation in the school schedule is a mid-morning coffee break. Classes now begin at 7:45 and end at 12:05. Immediately



after chapel the majority of the student body file into the Commons where coffee and rolls are served by "Charlie." Good fellowship is enjoyed by all.

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The seminary chorus under the direction of Nathan Vander Werf is now appearing to sing the introits and responses at some of our chapel services. They also sang at

the Reformation Day service at Dimnent Memorial Chapel, Hope College.

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Class lectures were ended on November 18, and the first quarter exams followed, November 19-25. With exams and papers finished, students and faculty enjoyed a Thanksgiving recess. The second quarter began on December 1.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ*, by Ned B. Stonehouse, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958. Pp. 269. \$3.00.

This book, first published in 1944, has now gone into a second edition with a few minor changes. (The companion volume, *The Witness of Luke to Christ*, appeared in 1951 and should be read in conjunction with it.) It is a study in the interpretation of the first two gospels, attempting to discover what the witness of the gospels really is, as far as Christ is concerned. Dr. Stonehouse has cut through a maze of critical scholarship in a judicious manner, seeking the answer in the method in which the authors delineate the historical career of Jesus.

From the title (which incidentally cites the gospels in the reverse order in which they are discussed) one would suspect the author's interest to be basically Christology. This is somewhat misleading, as he is concerned primarily with what the gospels say in the light of what scholars have proposed. Thus he engages in a discussion of a number of critical problems in each of the gospels, which he treats separately.

Stonehouse holds the gospels are not biographies, for each evangelist deals with his material in a topical rather than in a chronological manner. Mark sets forth the glad tidings concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who appears on earth shrouded in mystery. There is a passing to and fro between disclosure and hiddenness, apprehension of messiahship and bewilderment. Matthew depicts Jesus "as the Messianic King, the Son of David, whose history fulfills the O.T. revelation" (p. 119). The "history of Jesus, in its origin,

purpose, unfolding and consummation, is understood as the action of God fulfilling his own word to the prophets" (p. 192). The author calls into question the parallelism between Jesus and Moses and divides the gospel at the incident of Caesarea Philippi, as do the other synoptists.

Stonehouse makes clear that generally accepted theories need to be examined ever afresh, and altered in the light of the biblical evidence. He has an incisive way of handling critical problems, some keen insights and pertinent observations on many matters of exegesis. Herein is to be found the real value of the book.

There are a few weaknesses, however, which one wishes had been remedied in this reprint. At times the theme is lost in a maze of critical discussion. While there is a synopsis prefacing each chapter, a concluding summary to each of the sections would have been helpful. The author treats exegesis independent of literary relationships and the *sitz im leben* of the pericopes and the gospels themselves. This reviewer cannot help but feel that exegesis must take into consideration the literary form, provenance, social, historical and religious conditions behind the biblical material, as well as the use made of it by the author in line with his purpose. Here one notes a lack of reference to Hebrew and Greek concepts behind the Christological titles (e.g., there is no reference to royal theology in discussing Son of God and no material beyond Daniel elicited in treating Son of Man). In fact there is a paucity of references to the Old Testament in the book. Finally, one regrets that in this reprint no account was taken of scholarship in the field since 1944.

VERNON H. KOOY

*The Spiritual Message of Hebrews*, by Pearl Vass, New York: Greenwich Book Publishers, 1959. Pp. 7-150. \$2.75.

I found myself laying this book aside with mingled feelings. There is much about it that is stimulating. But there is also much about it that is vague. At times my reaction was one of wholehearted assent. At others, I found myself in violent disagreement with the author's approach, or somewhat confused by her loose use of words and terms which could be as easily the jargon of some pagan cult as the language of biblical Christianity. In comparing the thrust of the book with the Christian view of God and the world, of time and of eternity, of sin and of salvation, as found in the Bible, I was left with an impression much akin to that which one receives after studying certain modern art forms. It seemed, so to speak, that at one moment the portrait had eyes—while in a twinkling they seemed to be more like a nose—and at last the whole thing congealed into an unintelligible blob on the canvass. On the one hand I felt an admiration for the author's spirituality, and on the other sorrow that she has not realized the joy of a more balanced and uncluttered view of the Christian faith.

Repeatedly her approach to the nature of man, his predicament and his destiny, is a strange kind of mysticism akin to theosophy; a conception of reincarnation not unlike that of Buddhism; and a curious talent for exalting God as a Supreme Being at one moment and of bringing him down to the status of some form of mystical ether at another.

For example, spiritual rebirth, as taught by our Lord to Nicodemus, is viewed as being not only a revelation of the necessity of inner regeneration of man by God, but also as a specific means of documenting our Lord's belief in reincarnation.

There is much about the book that can be viewed as inspiring. At times it would appear that her view of the glory of productive work, her recognition of man's dependence upon God, and her understanding of the problem of sin, are sound and wholesome. However, she has no clear grasp of matters pertinent to the atonement, the judgments of God, or Christology. Melchizedec and Christ are both viewed as incarnations of the same personality at various stages of spiritual evolution. She declares our hope to rest in the assurance of similar progress down the long corridors of time from life to life, until at last we attain unto Paradise in our final great incarnation. It makes interesting speculation, but for me it remains a curious study ending in spiritual confusion.

DONALD P. BUTEYN

*God's River*, by Donald Grey Barnhouse, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958. Pp. 9-224. \$3.50.

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God," sang the psalmist. Whether or not Dr. Barnhouse is indebted to this line for his title, the figure provides a useful description of his approach. *God's River* is the fourth volume in the author's series of expositional studies which take their point of departure from Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The previous volumes under the titles *Man's Ruin*, *God's Wrath*, and *God's Remedy* cover Romans 1-4, and at this prolific rate, the reader may anticipate as many as eight more volumes before the letter's sixteen chapters are exhausted.

In this instance, God's river flows from the eleven verses of Romans 5. Their exposition is swelled to main stream proportions by the feeding of countless tributaries as well as the following out of many branches. Romans 5 is indeed a frequent "point of departure" as the exposition ranges over

"the whole Word of God." By this method the author is able to average nearly three chapters of exposition per verse. Now and then a verse reaches a veritable flood stage as with 5:2 and 5:5, whose treatment runs to six and seven chapters respectively. Some notion of the subject range involved may be gained by reference to the latter verse. Romans 5:5 reads, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." A sampling of the fifty pages devoted to this verse reveals the author discoursing on topics including "'Spirit' versus 'Ghost,'" "The Spirit a Person," "Nicodemus," "Baptism," "Christian Living," "Sealed," "The Wesleys' Hymns," "Christian Hope," and "Full Acceptance." Defying any single classification, *God's River* is a composite of biblical and systematic theology, exegesis, exposition and evangelism.

Dr. Barnhouse is now in his tenth year of radio teaching from the Epistle to the Romans and the flavor of the spoken word is in his writing. Sometimes he is personal ("My experience was typical: I was a sinner, less perfect than God."); sometimes emotional ("Even more, much more, now that He is alive, He lives for us. Oh joy! Oh joy! Oh joy!"); but always warm and helpful. His clear, animated style makes for easy, rapid reading. *God's River* is admirably suited for all who have ever desired a front seat in a bible class taught by Donald G. Barnhouse.

— JAMES I. COOK

*An Introduction to the Apocrypha* by Bruce M. Metzger, New York: Oxford University Press, 1957. Pp. ix-274. \$4.00.

With the appearance of the *Revised Standard Version of the Apocrypha* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons,

1957) it is especially fitting that we have a new introduction to the Apocrypha. Surely everyone interested in intertestamental literature is delighted that Professor Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary, a highly esteemed biblical scholar, has undertaken to do this work.

Interest in the apocryphal books has been quickened since some of them and portions of certain pseudepigraphical books have been found among the Qumran writings. The Apocrypha, although not of canonical status in Protestant confessions of faith, has always served as a valuable source for the history of pre-Christian times. The social, political and theological climate of the intertestamental times has much to tell us in our study of the New Testament. As example, one may cite the intense zeal and loyalty to the law for which many fought and gave their lives; and yet one should note that this very same loyalty drove itself into a works-righteousness type of salvation which is contrary to the spirit of the Old Testament and which can become the bane of Christian fanaticism also.

The author has an introduction on the meaning of the word "Apocrypha" and the growth of the Old Testament canon. He then discusses each of the fifteen books—the Belgic Confession of Faith, Article VI, lists fourteen books by including the Letter of Jeremiah as the final chapter in the book of Baruch. The contents of each book are given with the purpose and teachings of the book well documented by references and quotations. Professor Metzger has added the interesting feature of pointing out certain uses of these books in the Church, e.g., the marriage of Tobias and Sarah in the book of Tobit becomes a model for Christian marriage (pp. 40f.).

The chapters on "The Apocrypha and the New Testament," on "A Brief History of the Apocrypha in the Christian Church," and on "The Pervasive In-

fluence of the Apocrypha" are very informative and will surely bring amazement to many readers to learn that the Apocrypha played so great a role in the Christian Church.

Appendix II, "New Testament Apocrypha," serves a double purpose of clearly distinguishing between it and the Old Testament Apocrypha and of presenting helpful information about these post-New Testament writings.

This book has a useful place in the seminary classroom and can equally well be used by any study group in the Church.

—LESTER J. KUYPER

*The Life and Times of Herod the Great* by Stewart Perowne, New York: Abingdon Press, 1956. Pp. 6-187. \$5.50.

*The Later Herods* by Stewart Perowne, New York: Abingdon, 1958. Pp. xvi-216. \$6.50.

Interest in the history of pre-Christian and Christian times has increased much during the last ten years because of the Dead Sea discoveries. The many manuscripts, biblical and extra-biblical, which were found in caves in the Judean cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea, have made the century before Christ and the one after Christ throb with activity. Although these two books by Perowne make scant reference to these much discussed discoveries, they present in interesting manner much material about the Herods and the important part they play in the political affairs of New Testament times.

The author in his acknowledgement of sources shows that he has employed the works of past scholarship, such as Dean Millman's *History of the Jews* and Emil Schürer's *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*; and he is acquainted with modern scholars such as Père Abel and Père Vincent.

At no point, however, does the author acknowledge these sources or scholars which is not of such serious consequence as to nullify the value of these books. Naturally this precludes any leads to scholarly research.

Anyone reading *The Life and Times of Herod the Great* soon senses that the author has captured his interest. As one ponders how it is that the book reads well, he no doubt will discover that the author is skilled in using the language of the modern press. In describing the famous Cleopatra he says, "For Cleopatra, at least, the sands were running low" (p. 74). When Herod received Cleopatra with simulated delight, he "showed neither hatred to his despoiler Cleopatra, nor weakness to his would-be seducer, for Cleopatra still had personal designs on her fascinating host. Herod took the opportunity to make one of the celebrated 'arrangements' with Cleopatra" in farming Jericho for an annual rent of two hundred talents (*idem*). So it is that the writer's art working on a most colorful, often times devilish, character produces a book that should be interesting for our time.

*The Later Herods* will help the student of the New Testament to keep the Herods and the Agrippas straight. More than that, the backgrounds with Rome, with the Nabateans and with the Arabs will come into clear setting as these nations come within the scope of New Testament history. To make the family line clear, a chart of the family of Herod is placed at the close of the book. Other charts and outlines of historical events put the secular and biblical events at ready reference. Many interesting pictures of places, statues and coins add to the value of the books, even though the pictures are not of recent years.

If one wants more than a dictionary article of Herod or the later Herods, these books offer information both reliable and interesting. The author served as member of the Palestine Government

Education Service and was in the Colonial Service in various parts of the Middle East. Archaeology was his hobby through which he has made a worthwhile contribution for the understanding of New Testament times.

—LESTER J. KUYPER

*Faith and Its Difficulties*, by J. H. Bavinck, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959. Pp. 9-85. \$2.00.

In this small book the reader is given a spiritual treat by a scholar who has had a long life of service. For twenty years he served as a missionary in Indonesia and for a like period, since 1939, he has been Professor of Missions at the Free University of Amsterdam. He knows the human heart and he speaks to it effectively in a simple, unsophisticated manner. The book is free from all technical paraphernalia although it is written from a background of solid and impressive scholarship.

Dr. Bavinck, a nephew of the well-known dogmatician, begins with a discussion of man's intuitive awareness of Something, rather than Someone, over against whom he stands. The caption of this chapter is "The Unknown God" and the author insists that he is known truly only in Jesus Christ. Nature or experience cannot give us the revelation we need; nor can we escape the encounter with this Someone by ignoring him or by way of pantheistic denial. One must acknowledge him, and acknowledge him as he reveals himself.

The second chapter is a delightful essay on "Man: the Enigma" and reminds one of passages in Augustine and Pascal, two great students of the human soul. Man is shown to be a "Labyrinth of Contradictions," contrary desires which create tensions and make one wonder at times what kind of being it is with whom we have to do—who we are! Man's "Hopeful Daydreams" are

discussed and it is shown that man's estimate of himself is always uncertain. What is needed is a look at ourselves as we are and only God has that perspective and perception. There is then a profound discussion on the heart of the Christian and its difficulties in faith. Man is shown to be what he is, even in faith, and the picture is not an encouraging one. It is true, however, and the author is to be commended for his courage and honesty. The bright part of the picture he draws is the promise and grace of Jesus Christ who delivers us from what we are and assures us of his abiding presence.

M. E. OSTERHAVEN

*For Whom Did Christ Die?* by R. B. Kuiper, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959. Pp. 100. \$2.00.

Kuiper makes the rather obvious yet incisive observation that basically one can choose between but three alternative views of the atonement. The first, universalism, declares that God purposed to save all men in Christ and will do just that. Second, the Arminian or inconsistent view, that God purposed to save all but has failed to accomplish his objective. Third, the Calvinistic, limited, or particular view, that God purposed to save some and shall save all those whom He purposed to save.

The author points out that universalism, on one score at least, is less dishonoring to the majesty of God than Arminianism. This is true, he declares, because universalism posits, not only the salvation of all but the effective power of God to accomplish that end. Arminianism also declares the purpose of God to save all men but would denude God of his sovereignty by confessing the inability of God to accomplish his own purpose. Only a limited or particular atonement is consonant with all the facts of Scripture and experience, for the Reformed view holds that God pur-

posed to save only some, and that He does precisely that.

The Rev. Harry Puis, in his penetrating review of my book, *The Deeper Faith*, suggested that the chapter on the "Limited Atonement" would have been strengthened by a treatment of texts which "apparently" set forth a universalistic view; this was not my purpose, but Kuiper does just that. With unassailable logic he demolishes such interpretations of passages which "apparently" teach universalism.

Several priceless quotations are interspersed, including this one from Machen, "To say that Christ died for all men alike and then that not all men are saved, to say that Christ died for humanity simply in the mass, and that the choice of those who . . . are saved depends upon the greater receptivity of some as compared with others . . . is a doctrine that takes from the Gospel much of its sweetness and . . . joy. From the cold Arminian creed we turn ever again with new thankfulness to the warm and tender individualism of our Reformed Faith. . . . Thank God we can say . . . , not just: 'He died for the mass of humanity, and how glad I am that I am amid that mass,' but: 'He loved me and gave Himself for me; my name was written from all eternity upon his heart, and when He hung and suffered . . . on the Cross He thought of me, even me, as one for whom in his grace He was willing to die' (*God Transcendent and other Sermons*, p. 136).

The concluding chapter, "Scriptural Universalism," speaks, in its most difficult sections, to the first of the *Three Points* of 1924, namely, the *well-meant offer of salvation*, though Kuiper does not acknowledge that he is speaking to this issue in the context of the Christian Reformed-Protestant Reformed controversy. This is so obviously the case, however, that the real import of this chapter will not be grasped, except with reference to the writings of the Reverend

Herman Hoeksema on this point. The unwary reader may find himself in the position of listening to the affirmative case in a debate in which the negative is unrepresented.

If your reaction is similar to that of the reviewer, you will not put this little book on the shelf after a single reading. I must read its more difficult sections again, perhaps a third time and a fourth. This, to me, is a recommendation. Any book which sends one back to the Scriptures and to the writings of our forefathers is of unusual value.

GORDON GIROD

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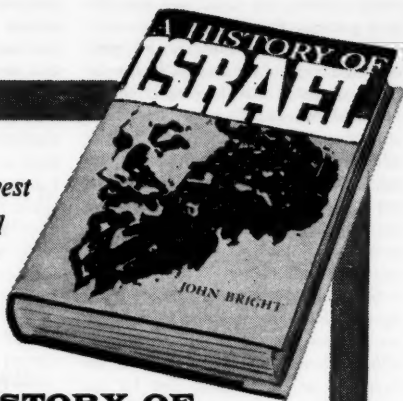
*Ministry and Priesthood: Christ's and Ours*, by T. W. Manson, Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959. Pp. 7-76. \$1.50.

Two lectures delivered by Professor Manson on separate occasions are included in this little volume. The first is entitled "Some Aspects of the Ministry of Jesus and the Task of His Church." Three aspects of the ministry of Jesus and of the task of his Church are discussed, separately and in relation to each other. The three themes are Jesus the Teacher, Christ the Conqueror, and Christ the Sacrifice. Manson's consideration of these themes is presented in a nontechnical way, though everywhere thorough New Testament scholarship is in the background. Whether or not the reader can accept all of Manson's conclusions, he will find this lecture stimulating and highly suggestive for his own work of interpretation.

The second lecture, on "The Priesthood of Believers," deals with the always-present problem of how the Christian ministry developed the way it did. It would be no problem, of course, if the various branches of the Church could reach some agreement. For the present this seems quite impossible. Manson calls for a thorough discussion



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relating to the problems of priesthood and ministry by non-episcopal scholars (p. 40), with special attention given to the meaning of the term "priesthood." Manson opens the kind of discussion he has in mind by proceeding to a very fine analysis of the priesthood idea in the Bible and in the early Christian church. The argument is much too lengthy to develop here. He finds two things indubitable, the New Testament doctrine of the high-priesthood of Christ, and that of the priesthood of believers. What must be clarified is the relation of the Church's ministers to these two factors (p. 68). He offers some pertinent suggestions in the matter. Anyone who gives careful study to these lectures will find himself well-rewarded.

—ELTON M. EENIGENBURG

*The Gospel and Christian Education*, by D. Cambell Wyckoff, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959. Pp. 7-191. \$3.75.

This book by the Professor of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary is a sequel to his recently published work, *The Task of Christian Education*. The first book was written in more popular style. This work is intentionally more technical in character. Dr. Wyckoff sets out in this work to construct a theory of Christian education. First he discusses the use of foundation disciplines, then the nature and function of theory, and finally the result of theory in objectives, curriculum principles, and administration.

Professor Wyckoff's desire is to present a theory that is theologically valid and educationally sound. He states that "Christian education can and must be theologically thorough and accurate, and at the same time maintain educational integrity and soundness" (p. 76). In order to properly posit a religious education theory, Professor Wyckoff re-

views our culture and describes it as "pluralistic, dynamic, complex, scientific and secular." The Christian Church must witness to and in this culture. Thus it makes an imprint on society. True Christian education helps men to see things as they are and then come to grips with life. Christian education speaks of the transformed life. There is the ministry of the living Word. A history of the approach of both "secular" education and Christian education to culture follows. True Christian education theory must be based on theology, philosophy, history, psychology and sociology. Theory sets forth the objectives of the educational process, its curriculum principles, and its principles of administration. In seeking to find a center for Christian education, Professor Wyckoff seeks to bypass such proposed centers as the Bible, Christian doctrine, or human experience. He believes there is one element that will bring this all together and that is the gospel of God's redeeming activity in Jesus Christ.

This is the basis, then, of a Christian education theory, the Gospel. It is the essential element in establishing the institutions of Christian education and devising their curriculum. The Gospel is then thought of as vital and alive, living encounter. A discussion follows on motivation, goals and purposes. Objectives point the way and provide standards of value. There is also a discussion of the agencies for Christian education and its administration, locally, denominationally and inter-denominationally.

This is a very provocative and stimulating work. Dr. Wyckoff emphasizes the importance of applying theory and objectives at the local, denominational level. This is something the Reformed Church ought to consider especially in terms of the "new cooperative" curriculum series.

Professor Wyckoff is somewhat afraid of literal biblicism and describes those

who hold it as "Revivalists," a new word, perhaps better than "Fundamentalists," only very likely to be less acceptable. Personally, I believe we have not yet arrived at a clear theory of education that centers in Bible content, and yet is experiential in outreach. Perhaps Professor Wyckoff approached this matter more existentially, for he is seeking a living approach.

This book is of value especially to the leader in religious education, or the pastor who is concerned with the vital role of Christian education in his church. The book is well worth its price.

— JEROME DE JONG

*The Sign of the Cross*, by O. P. Kretzmann, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959. Pp. 5-86. \$1.25.

The small paper bound booklet contains a series of Lenten sermons. The format of the sermons is different than we might expect. There is no clean-cut division, or divisions in the sermons. The text is not particularly expounded. There are few illustrations. Yet the approach is refreshing for our day. The themes of Lent are often so familiar that sometimes they have lost their real meaning for us. The messages are not in any chronological order. Perhaps this is intentional, although the chronological order might have added some force to the series. There are nine signs given: the signs of forgiveness, peace, understanding, agony, decision, mystery, power, finality, and his presence. I believe the sign of mystery is the most powerful. The cost of the booklet is not high, and it surely is worth its price for a new and different approach to the Lenten themes.

— JEROME DE JONG

*God in the Eternal Present*, by Carl G. Howie, Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959. Pp. 7-128. \$2.25.

The author of this book is pastor of a Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, California. He has served several churches and has been a navy chaplain. He holds the doctor of philosophy degree from Johns Hopkins University.

The purpose of the book is to give relevance to the Christian faith. The author is anxious that men should see Christianity as a living faith. He is making an earnest effort to correlate biblical theology and Christian life. Every minister has no doubt felt the need of making Christianity more vital. The author of such a book opens himself to criticism, of course, because some of evangelical persuasion are not satisfied with the "soundness" of a work unless the tried and tested clichés and phrases of conservatism are sounded. Yet I believe the author makes a good effort. More content (theological) would have made the book a bit more stimulating.

Chapter 1 declares boldly the exclusive character of Christianity. "Again Christians must proclaim our faith as *unique* and *exclusive*" (p. 26). It also declares commitment to Christ to be comprehensive. Chapter 2 deals with biblical revelation. This chapter is very disappointing. It is true, of course, that we must see the Bible in terms of a living encounter, yet the author has set forth the neo-orthodox position. The Bible is a series of images and impressions. The words are immaterial. We must be careful of an "impossible literalism." Chapter 3 presents the necessity of our meeting with God every day. The idea of the future hope is toned down. Some criticisms of "otherworldliness" are well taken but the Christian may not be as unconcerned about the future as this chapter suggests. We are "strangers and pilgrims." Chapter 4 speaks of sin. There are a number of disconnected illustrations at the beginning of the chapter but the definition of sin on page 65 is good. Chapter 5 speaks of Christ. One must

read the entire book to get the author's Christology. One might surmise from this chapter that Christ was "good" and the resurrection "spiritual." However, Chapters 6 and 7 set forth the evangelical position of the diety of Christ and His sacrificial atonement. Chapter 8 deals with vocation—every man has a calling. Chapter 9 emphasizes the need of speaking truth in love and Chapter 10 is on final things. It is true that the Christian life is joyous, but there remains a "vale of tears" in spite of what our author says.

This book is interesting but not as stimulating as it might be. It does seek to make the "old" gospel new and relevant.

JEROME DE JONG

*Prayers For Christian Services*, by Carl A. Glover, New York: Abingdon Press, 1959. Pp. 5-159. \$2.25.

These 132 original prayers, conveniently arranged and indexed according to subject, will provide leaders of public worship with ideas for effective prayers for varied occasions.

Included are prayers for use with the choir before the service, invocations, collects, thanksgiving, penitence and confession, petition, intercession, dedication, offertory, pastoral prayer, prayer after the sermon. Also, there are prayers for special days and occasions.

It is the author's thesis that prayer is the vital center of worship. The minister must be in the spirit of prayer if he is to lead the congregation into an awareness of the presence of God. Effectiveness in public prayer requires spiritual preparation by the leader. That is basic. Only as his heart is right can he avoid being a "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

However, more is needed than preparation of the heart, though that is essential. There must be mental discipline. The pastor may be spiritual

and sincere, yet fail to stir the hearts of his people as he leads them in prayer. Often in public prayer words become stale and commonplace, sentences are formless and discursive, spiritual horizons are limited and narrow. Those who lead groups in prayer will find in this book an excellent source of ideas and inspiration which will assist in overcoming the above-named deficiencies so frequently evident in public prayer.

—HENRY A. MOUW

*Devotions and Prayers*, by Johann Arndt, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958. Pp. 5-111. \$1.50.

These prayers and devotional thoughts enable us to profit from the deeply spiritual writing of the German theologian of the 16th century, Johann Arndt, who has been termed the second reformer of the German churches.

The prayers and devotions here presented have been selected from two Protestant classics also written by Arndt—"True Christianity" and "The Garden of Paradise." Although written many years ago these meditations and prayers are applicable to the age of space-travel and missile development in which we are living.

The spiritual experience which forms the basis for this material emerged from Arndt's troubled pastorate at Brunswick, Germany between 1598 and 1610. This was a stormy period in a restless age. Arndt, a sensitive soul, shared the restlessness of those days, longing, even as we do, for inner peace.

—HENRY A. MOUW

*With Christ In The Garden*, by Lynn J. Radcliffe, New York: Abingdon Press, 1959. Pp. 7-80. \$1.50.

Lynn James Radcliffe is pastor of the

Hyde Park Community Methodist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Twice he traveled to Palestine to obtain background material for this little volume. The author himself spent a night in prayer and meditation in the Garden of Gethsemane at the time of the Passover. He knelt at the exact spot, or very close to it, where the Savior knelt in agonizing prayer.

The book is designed to lead the readers to a closer communion with God. By vividly recreating the scene at Gethsemane on the eve of the Crucifixion, Dr. Radcliffe delves into the heart of Jesus' prayer life and shows how he was strengthened by prayer.

There are five chapters in the book:

1. Deeper Into the Garden.
2. Remove This Cup.
3. Asleep At the Place of Prayer.
4. The Mystery of the Divine Will.
5. The Man Who Refused to Escape.

This book is valuable for personal devotional reading and for group study. Although especially appropriate during Lent it will bring inspiration throughout the year. Here also, the preacher will discover precious seed thoughts for a series of sermons during Lent.

—HENRY A. MOUW

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*For Such A Time As This*, by Oswald Riess, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959. Pp. 138. \$2.50.

This is a book of twelve sermons by the popular and inspiring pastor of the Bethany Lutheran Church of Detroit, which he has served for thirty years. He has written three books previously, all of which have been highly endorsed.

These sermons are practical and deeply spiritual. Their tone is firmly evangelical in tradition's best heritage. The emphasis is not necessarily apologetic, but rather a spiritual undergirding for everyday living.

In language and rhetoric this pastor

excels. His illustrations are vivid and moving. He makes no apparent effort to be clever, but he succeeds wonderfully well in catching and holding the reader's attention. His use of Scripture, both in text reference and as illustrative material is very instructive and edifying.

If the reader is a young student he will find in this book much practical help in sermonic structure, the use of word pictures and general challenge. The ordinary pastor will find much also to emulate and to stimulate his thinking. The spiritually minded layman will find real strength and encouragement in the everyday task of living.

This book will be a real asset in every Christian home. Such sermons as "The Eternal Gloria" and "The Transfigured Thorn" as also others in this book simply call upon all that is within you to seek to live "for such a time as this."

—HENRY J. TEN CLAY

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*God in My Life*, by Lloyd C. Wicke, New York: Abingdon Press, 1959. Pp. 128. \$1.00.

Our perennial problem of putting what we know into action is the consideration of this book. To help the Christian find God in his daily life is the aim of Dr. Wicke, whose theme in this delightfully illustrated volume is a paraphrase of Paul: "Look abroad, discern his power and divinity!" (Rom. 1:20).

In ten chapters Dr. Wicke illustrates the reality of God in our life, our faith, prayer, the Bible, your home, your church, your stewardship, your work, perfection and eternity. Many books of this nature have come from the presses in recent years, which speaks of the need of modern men to find their God and faith in other than stained glass on Sunday mornings. *God in My Life* is a valuable contribution to the area of

applied Christianity because its conversational style and rich illustration will make it clear and interesting to the man at whom it is aimed — Mr. Average Christian.

Its theological slant is historic and evangelical in the Methodist tradition. Readers of Reformed persuasion will have difficulty with Chapter 9 on "Perfection," the hallmark of Wesley. The heart of the author's stand is: "Perfection does not mean absolute sinlessness. It does mean freedom from intentional, deliberate sin." While we split hairs on this subject, we may be thankful for the author's emphasis on an area of faith often neglected.

*God in My Life* will make good church library reading material, and because of brevity and apt illustration will be an oft-quoted volume. Its index helps to make it a usable reference work.

LEONARD WEZEMAN

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*Life Crucified*, by Oswald C. Hoffman, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959. Pp. 125. \$2.50.

The author of this volume is the well-known minister of the Lutheran Hour radio program. It is much more than a collection of sermons preached over the radio. The sermons are neatly tied together to fit the theme that has been chosen as a title. It is also the title of the first chapter. They sound a strong evangelistic note and breathe a spirit of consecration and devotion.

Christ is the Life that was crucified. The Christian life means participation and sharing in the crucifixion. From theme to theme the author moves and skillfully presents Christ's sufficiency for all the needs of life. To be Christian means to magnify Jesus Christ. God must be glorified in all of life, and the author deals with such perplexing problems as suffering, loneliness and sorrow.

The book is written in a very read-

able style. One cannot help being touched by its fervency and zeal. There is an element of the mystical in it that is highly acceptable. Spiritual and psychological insights are skillfully blended in making a biblical answer to the totality of life. It is practical, down-to-earth preaching of high calibre.

The book will be enjoyed by laymen as well as ministers. It is filled with scintillating sentences and pithy sayings. The illustrations are apropos and short. The content is pertinent to modern life and the book could well serve as an instrument of devotional reading. All the sermons are intended to give fuller meaning to the redemptive love of God in Christ. It is a strong call to dedicated living in the living Lord.

JOHN R. STAAT

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*Invitation to Commune*, by Charles Ray Goff, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959. Pp. 94. \$1.75.

The purpose of this book is to give the reader a deeper appreciation of Holy Communion. In the preface the author asks, "What service in the church is as futile as Holy Communion if it fails to communicate? Conversely, is there any service comparable to the communion when a congregation enters into it in a spirit of humility and with a hunger for righteousness? . . . This book is written in the hope that it may add something to the growing appreciation of this central act of worship in our churches."

The eight chapters of this small book discuss the familiar phrases commonly used by churches when inviting worshippers to communion. The need to "truly and earnestly repent of your sins" is well presented as the first and inescapable stop on the Way of Wonder. What your neighbor has to do with your communion is ably discussed under the phrase, "Ye that . . . are in love and charity with your neighbors." For true communion one must "intend to lead

a new life" and then begin to do something about it by "walking from henceforth in his holy ways." One's attitude toward the sacrament, its meaning and blessing, are presented under the headings, "Draw Near with Faith," "On Taking the Sacrament," and "To Your Comfort." There is a final chapter on the value of confessing our faith and our sins.

The approach of the author is not theological but practical. It is easy, interesting, helpful reading. Out of his broad experience Dr. Goff brings many illustrations to illuminate his thoughts. For the many people in our churches who take communion lightly and have only begun to appreciate the potential blessing of the sacrament this little book will have some helpful thoughts.

J. ROBERT STEEGSTRA

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*The Power of God in a Parish Program*, by Joseph E. McCabe, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959. Pp. 164. \$3.50.

This is one of the most helpful books I have read. The minister who reads this book will very likely be determined to put one or more of these good ideas into practice in his church.

Dr. McCabe became the minister of a large Presbyterian church in suburban Philadelphia in 1953. During his ministry there he initiated various pastoral techniques and programs which increased his effectiveness and strengthened the church. Whenever he was frustrated by ineffective pastoral work or shallow church practices he asked himself if there were not a better way. In this book this successful pastor tells the methods and programs he instituted in the fields of pastoral calling, counseling, receiving members, visitation evangelism, the Christian funeral, the Chris-

tian wedding, baptism, the prayer meeting, deepening of the spiritual life, and stewardship. Most chapters follow this simple outline: 1. The Problem, 2. What we did, 3. The Results.

The author has given some excellent suggestions to overcome superficiality and stale tradition in the church. Ineffective practices are often continued because the minister lacks courage or zeal to make a change. This book may give some of us the incentive needed to tackle these problems in our own churches.

The reader may be inspired by Dr. McCabe's efforts to be a real pastor to his people. The chapter on "The Counseling Shelf" includes a list of the books which people have reported to be most helpful with their problems.

In an effort to eliminate easy church membership, everyone who planned to join the church was required to attend four membership seminars. The substance of the pastor's talks at these meetings is included.

The two most provocative chapters for me were those on "The Christian Funeral" and "The Christian Wedding." Our members should be encouraged to hold funeral services in the church and the music and the message should express the triumphant note of our faith. The chapter on "The Christian Wedding" has suggestions on marriage counseling and improving the wedding rehearsal, but it deals primarily with wedding music. The author laments the low estate of music in the Christian wedding service and suggests what he considers to be appropriate.

Prayer meetings in various homes are offered as a solution to a poorly-attended prayer meeting in the church. A program for deepening the spiritual life is given with a list of books read by the committed members. The last chapter is on stewardship and the every member canvass.

— J. ROBERT STEEGSTRA



## WRITERS IN THIS ISSUE

### ARTICLES

Gordon L. Van Oostenburg is minister of Bethany Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Lester J. Kuyper is Professor of Old Testament at the seminary.

John H. Gerstner, Professor of Church History at Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary was lecturer for our fall convocation. One of his lectures appears in this issue.

Thomas Boslooper is minister of Second Church, Pella, Iowa.

Henry Stob is Associate Professor of Ethics and Apologetics at Calvin Seminary. His article is the lecture he delivered at Western Seminary last year.

Elton Bruins is minister of Elmsford Church, Elmsford, New York.

### BOOK REVIEWS

Vernon H. Kooy is Professor of New Testament at New Brunswick Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Donald P. Buteyn is minister of First Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

James I. Cook is minister of Blawenburg Church, Blawenburg, New Jersey.

M. E. Osterhaven is Professor of Systematic Theology at the seminary.

Gordon Girod is minister of Seventh Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Elton M. Eenigenburg is Professor of Church History at the seminary.

Jerome De Jong is minister of Immanuel Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Henry A. Mouw is minister of Sixth Church, Holland.

Henry J. Ten Clay is minister of First Church, Grandville, Michigan.

Leonard Wezeman is minister of First Church, Oak Harbor, Washington.

John R. Staat is minister of Second Church, Grand Haven, Michigan.

J. Robert Steegstra is minister of Covenant Church, Muskegon Heights, Michigan.



